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CHRISTOPHER AND CRESSIDA

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CHRISTOPHER

AND

CRESSIDA

BY

MONTGOMERY CARMICHAEL

AUTHOR OF
"THE SOLITARIES OF THE SAMBUCA," "IN TUSCANY,"
"THE LIFE OF J. W. WALSHE," ETC.

New York
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S. M. G.

AB I.

EX CORDE PLENO

So they lov'd, as love in twain
Had the essence but in one;
Two distincts, division none:
Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
Distance, and no space was seen
'Twixt the turtle and his queen:
But in them it were a wonder.

Property was thus appall'd
That the self was not the same;
Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was call'd.

Reason, in itself confounded,
Saw division grow together;
To themselves yet either neither,
Simple were so well compounded,

That it cried, "How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one!
Love hath reason, reason none,
If what parts can so remain."

From *The Phœnix and the Turtle.*

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INTRODUCTORY

It was in the autumn of 1913 that I left the Sambuca to write of the religious life led in that remote Solitude by a small band of men, all laymen not bound by any monastic vow. My book did not appear until December, 1914.[1] Meantime the War had broken out, and abandoning all idea of returning to the solitary life, I hurried home to see what work I could do for my country. Too old to enlist, I was given work in a department of the War Office where my languages were of use, and I was not released till September, 1919.

* * * * *

Being now freed from duty, my thoughts turned once more to the Sambuca, where I had found my natural element and real vocation in life. I came unannounced, walking up from the village, as I had done on the eventful day of my first arrival. Soon I was on the crisp gravel road that runs along the spur of the hill, no longer the *strada mulattiera* I had known, but a

[1] *The Solitaries of the Sambuca,* London, Burns & Oates, 1914.

handsome carriage road. A little further and I was in the lovely cypress avenue that leads to the portals of the Solitude, and could discern the semicircular inscription in the arch above: O BEATA SOLITUDO: O SOLA BEATITUDO. Not a soul was visible, nowhere was there any sound of human life. I pushed open the postern gate eagerly as I had done seven years before, and entered the inclosure. Quickly I ascended the familiar path leading to Casauban's cottage. . . .

On the edge of the greensward, before the cottage, I paused abruptly. Under the porch of the little house sat a figure very unlike Casauban, smoking a meditative pipe. It was that of a man over sixty, an obvious Englishman. Instead of the white tunic of the Solitaries, he was wearing an ill-fitting, well-worn suit of dark tweeds, and big Italian boots. His beard attracted immediate attention. It was sparse and uneven, and there were places at the sides where it had refused to grow: patches of fair hair were still discernible among the grey. Altogether a grotesque deformity it seemed, and one could not but wonder why he should wear it, for clean shaven he would have been decidedly handsome. The nose was finely chiselled, and the blue eyes, fresh, clear, and

youthful. He was very unmistakably a gentleman, but nothing could be gathered of his character by merely looking at him. Nor could one in the least divine what he was or ever had been. There was a look of fatigue in the face, as of one whose life had been a strain, but that would probably disappear in intercourse. One thing, however, was quite evident to me: that though here, and at home in the Sambuca, he was no Solitary. What, then, was he doing in the Solitude?

He caught sight of me and advanced to meet me, briskly, inquiringly. The tired look had gone out of his face: he was alert and business-like.

"I expected to find Mr. Casauban here," I explained.

"Ah! then you've been here before!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," I replied; "I lived here six years ago. I was one of the Solitaries."

"I suppose you left to join up like some of the others?" he inquired.

"No. I had left before the War broke out. I left to write a book about the place."

"What!" he cried in genuine astonishment. "Are you the author of the *Solitaries of the Sambuca?* Are you Mr. Daniel Mauldsley?

That is extremely interesting to me. Let us sit down and talk. I owe it to your book that I am here——"

"But," I interrupted, perhaps looking him up and down, "are you a Solitary?"

"No, I should hope not," he blurted out, but quickly pulled himself up and apologised. "No," he continued, "I'm only the business man and manager of the place. My temperament is entirely active. I admire the solitary life because the Church admires and exalts it, but I couldn't live the life of this place for two days together." He broke off and reflected for a moment. "You will be anxious to see Casauban, no doubt. He shall be told that you are here. For a long while now he lives almost exclusively in one of the *reclusoria* adjoining the church. I use his cottage now for my office and house. I suppose you have come back to lead the life. Your old cottage shall be got ready for you as soon as possible."

* * * * *

We chatted on a while like old friends, and, indeed, there was a charm of manner about him, a perfect self-possession, an absolute straightforwardness, that made it easy to know him and agreeable to talk to him. "You found me in

rather a deep brown study when you arrived," he continued. "I have a pretty nasty job to think over at present. The Father Confessor of this place, for whom I will admit I have unbounded respect, has put it on my conscience to write a sort of account of myself. But even supposing I were willing instead of most reluctant, I can't write two lines unless it's a business letter. Now, as soon as I learnt who you were, I said to myself: here's a man who has written one book from what he heard another man tell; if he would only do as much for me I should get over my difficulty. Because, of course, I can talk all right. Please don't say 'no' straight away. Get to know me a bit first. Well, at all events, we won't talk about it any more at present," he went on, waving aside my protests. "As managing man, I must look after your material wants. Come along with me to the villa outside. I fear you will have to stand being put up there for the night. To-morrow you shall be properly installed in your old cottage, and there I hope you will bear with an occasional visit from me until you've helped me through with my difficult task."

* * * * *

I ended by doing as he desired, and here

follows his story. I found him a brilliant, impetuous talker, sometimes eloquent, always vivid. I have done what I can to narrate as he narrated to me, and to preserve the impression of his words, but of the canvas which he painted in daring colours with a swiftly moving brush, I fear that little but an outline sketch has remained. I have thought it better, too, to suppress a certain free-and-easiness of speech, not to say slang, under which he tried to make light of his sufferings and hide his good qualities. If my sketch has lost in colour by this, I think it has gained in fidelity.

On the rare occasions that he quotes from a book, I have tried to give the exact reference in a footnote.

Christopher and Cressida

CHAPTER I

CHRISTOPHER

I AM the only son of the late Eustace Hilarion Gideon Mavourez,[1] Esquire, Fellow of Learned Societies, who began life as a banker, and ended as an antiquary of much diligence and no little fame in a restricted circle. In 1710 my great-great-grandfather, Simon Mavourez, second son of the 11th Lord Cleresby, married Johanna, only daughter of Hieronymus van Wissenkercke, head of the famous banking house of Antwerp and Bruges, and so it happened that my great-grandfather, Christopher, was born with a strong turn for trade and finance, the first phenomenon of the kind in a long family history. With the substantial fortune which he inherited from his mother, he was able to follow his bent, and wish-

[1] This very un-English looking name has the very English sound of MAVVERS.

ing to live in England, he bought himself a partnership in the London banking house of Peter & John Casauban, somewhere about the year 1740. The two branches of the family then tacitly parted company. The Mavourez were hot Jacobites, and they regarded it as a shame and disgrace that one of their race should have persevered in amassing wealth in a counting-house, rather than have given his life on the field of Culloden in defence of the rightful King, as did the 12th Lord Cleresby.

The Mavourez have ever been chivalrously devoted to the cause of the rightful King. Sir Guy Mavourez was created Baron Cleresby in 1463 by Edward IV for conspicuous services to the White Rose. Their attachment to Mary Stuart, to Charles I, Charles II, and James II lives in history, and down to the death of the Cardinal of York, they remained unwaveringly loyal to the exiled Royal family. The life and purpose seemed to go out of them a bit when there was no longer a lawful sovereign to fight and scheme for, but in the first half of the nineteenth century they drifted into the service of legitimate sovereigns abroad, such as Charles X of France, the two Don Carlos of Spain, Dom Miguel of Portugal, and the Bourbons and Austria-Estes of Italy.

The Mavourez, too, had always been unbending Recusants. There is not a single instance on record of one of the family having fallen from the Faith or made a marriage outside the household of the Faith, and those of them who fell from practice into a wild life, almost invariably made a penitential end. The 16th Lord Cleresby, a notorious rake and spendthrift, died in a Trappist Monastery in South Africa at the close of last century.

A peculiarity of the family is that every member, from the mid-thirteenth century onward, has borne the homely name of Gideon, in addition to another distinctively family Christian name. The origin of the custom is not at all obscure. Sir Hugo de Mavourez, who took the Cross in the third Crusade, was knighted by Richard Cœur-de-Lion before the walls of Acre in 1191. He did not start for England with his Royal master, for he had received a much higher call. On the night of September 1, 1192, being the date on which King Richard signed a truce with Saladin, as Sir Hugo was praying at the door of his tent, a window in the dark sky opened and he saw in a blaze of light a steep rocky mountain. On the summit of this sat a beautiful lady, crowned, and attended by heavenly spirits. All

up the steep way toiled, two and two, a band innumerable of hermits, young and old, dressed in black and white striped cloaks, each with his staff, and Sir Hugo saw himself, dressed like the others, bringing up the rear of the procession. Unlike the others, above his head alone, shone a white light from which tiny tongues of flame leapt upwards. At the head of the procession walked a hermit taller than the rest, with long white beard and very noble mien. He held no staff like his followers, but was bearing aloft a long two-edged sword, and at the end of the sword there blazed a light, and from the light shot upwards red spiral tongues of flame. The light and fire from the sword reflected back on the hermits' faces, which shone with ardour. Every now and then their majestic leader would turn round and wave his sword as if in encouragement, and every time he did so the flames from his sword spread right across the heavens from east to west, like brilliant summer lightning. And in the midst of this light in the sky, just as if Heaven itself had opened, Sir Hugo saw a lovely Babe seated on a throne, wearing a purple mantle lined with ermine. A large imperial crown was on his head; in his left hand he held an orb, in his right a golden sceptre.

He smiled down upon Sir Hugo with laughing eyes, and with his sceptre waved towards the top of the mountain. The mountain was Carmel, the lady the Queen of the Mountain, the leader of the procession the prophet Elias, *pater et dux*, the hermits her loyal subjects and servitors, coming to pay homage at the foot of her throne. Sir Hugo fell upon his face in an ecstasy of adoration, and in that position he was found in the morning by his squire. There was no mistaking the significance of the vision, and Sir Hugo promptly ascended Mount Carmel, and was admitted to the band of hermits who dwelt in caves and huts round the fountain of the Prophet Elias. The 1st of September was also the Feast of St. Gideon, Judge in Israel, and Sir Hugo for that reason changed his name to Gideon. When these hermits were obliged, after the first quarter of the thirteenth century, under pressure of the infidel invasion, to leave Palestine for Europe, Gideon, an old man of seventy, returned to his native country. He did not join any community of his Carmelite brethren, but lived an anchorite's life in a cave near Cleresby Castle, at a place now called St. Gideon's Well. According to the legend, the old anchorite's only worldly solace was a pet greyhound, and there

is a late fourteenth-century picture of him over the altar of the castle chapel, representing him in striped cloak with a greyhound nestling in its folds. He died at a great age, acclaimed a Saint by the infallible popular voice, and locally received the honours of the Altar. Since that day every Mavourez has been put under the patronage of the great family Saint by receiving the name of Gideon in baptism, and from him date the days of the family greatness. He represents—as Sir Hugo, chivalry; as St. Gideon, sanctity; the two chief family characteristics, at least in aspiration. The very colours of his cloak have a signification for us: black (our shield, and the colour of our armour) stands for chivalry; white (the wedding garment or robe of light) stands for sanctity. This curious striped cloak—the original form of the Carmelite Cappa—was taken to the castle chapel. It is put to a singular use for a relic. Instead of being religiously preserved, or shared with other churches, a small piece is cut off and given with some ceremony to each member of the family when he starts in life. There is a tradition that when the cloak has been entirely used up, the family will become extinct, in accordance

with the old doggerel distich still repeated in the neighbourhood:

> When St. Gideon's cloak is parted and done,
> Mavourez of Cleresby's race is run.

These details must weary in the twentieth century, I know, but I am what my forbears made me, and if you are going to be so good as to do a sketch of my life, it is necessary that you should know what manner of men they were. My father's *magnum opus* is a book called, *St. Gideon Mavourez: Crusader and Anchorite.* He takes the brief life from the *Acta Sanctorum Angliæ*, gives the variants at foot from codices in the Bodleian, British Museum, and Lambeth Libraries, and then launches into a wonderful mass of notes that take up seven-eighths of the volume. He discusses fully the original Carmelite habit, and especially the question whether the stripes on the cloak were *barry* or *paly*, concluding triumphantly for the former. The luckless wight, who in a number of the *Notitia Heraldica*, attempted to show that they were *bendy*, is treated with all the withering scorn merited by such an aberration. He proves—and this is really rather interesting—that the original Mavourez livery colours were yellow

and red, and that they were changed into white and black in the thirteenth century, undoubtedly in honour of St. Gideon's cloak.

* * * * *

Enough, and you will say too much, about our great St. Gideon. Certain essential family particulars you will find in Debourke, a copy of which is in the library here.[2] But I must not forget to mention another peculiarity in family nomenclature. Humphrey, Lord Cleresby, who lived through the Elizabethan persecution, put all his children under the special patronage of a particular Saint so as to obtain for them

[2] I take the following from the peerage in question and from other sources for the benefit of the curious in such matters. *Creations:* Baron 1463; Baronet of Nova Scotia, 1640; Count of the Holy Roman Empire, 1507. *Arms:* Sable, a chevron between three roses argent, barbed and seeded proper. *Crest:* An arm in armour embowed proper, couped at the shoulder, holding a broken spear. *Supporters:* Two greyhounds argent, collared azure. *Motto:* La Foy et le Roy. *Seats:* Cleresby Castle, Lincolnshire, and Mavourez-Melcombe, Devon. *Town Address:* Cleresby House, Carlos Street, Mayfair. The three roses argent were added by King Edward IV in the patent of nobility in honour of three daughters of the house, Mary, Blanche and Celia, whom he saluted at the Castle after Towton Field as three lovely white roses, swearing an oath that they should blossom forever. The supporters, of course, have their origin in old St. Gideon's pet greyhound.

steadfastness in the Faith. That is the significance of the third Christian name which every Mavourez has since borne. The custom of the three Christian names was religiously carried on by the severed branch from which I spring. I am Christopher Austin Gideon, and my grandfather was Andrew Benedict Gideon.

Yet another peculiarity of the family is its periodical rake and its periodical antiquary. My old cousin, Ludovic Aloysius Gideon Mavourez, was well-known to scholars and frequenters of the British Museum Reading Room, and his immense knowledge, of which he was ever prodigal, was freely used by other people. His monumental and life-long work, the "*Vitæ Interfectorum Regum*, or the Lives of the King-Killers from Ehud, who slew Eglon, King of Moab, down to the vile murderers of His late Imperial Majesty, Alexander II, Czar of all the Russias" (such was the title when it was approaching completion), was never finished and will certainly never be published, but the bulky MS., with his voluminous notes and excerpts, has been deposited in the Bibliotheca Archeologica in Lincoln's Inn Fields for the use of scholars, and its immense stores—

especially of seventeenth-century lore—will assuredly prove of great value to historians.[3]

My father was a curious example of reversion to type. For several generations his forbears had been solid, steady bankers. Catholics always, and regular at Mass at the Sardinian Chapel, they yet seemed to be a different race from the quixotic elder branch, always the champions of lost causes, that grew side by side with them. Something of the Cavalier face and head characteristic of that branch reappeared in my father, but none of its peculiar dashing romanticism. He had reverted to the type of the Mavourez antiquary with all the passionate devotion to the minutiæ of history that characterised, say, Nicholas Jerome Gideon Mavourez (fl. 1740), a famous authority on the science of seals.[4] But I think

[3] Some outline sketches of the 16th Lord Cleresby and his brothers, Ludovic, the antiquary; Humphrey, the soldier; and Everard, the priest, appeared in the *Month* of February, March, April and May, 1895. The Mavourez greyhounds have, quite unaccountably, been erroneously blazoned in the March number, *or* instead of *argent*.

[4] His *magnum opus* is: De Sigillis Regum Principum Procerumque qui ab aevo Longobardico usque ad tempora nostra in Italia floruerunt Tractatus Historicus, etc. Accedunt variæ dissertationes ad rem sphragisticam pertinentes, necnon, etc. (I cut out a large slice

my poor father had a spice of pedantry that was less conspicuous in Nicholas and, as I believe, wholly absent in Ludovic. "No, no," I can hear him saying in the deliberate tones of earnest conviction which so momentous a subject required; "no, no, it is decidedly an incorrect blazon to say that there are three lions in the shield of the Kings of England. No, no, I don't mean that they are leopards: that is a convenient, perhaps a useful, convention of French heralds. What I mean is that as all the three royal brutes exactly resemble each other, there can be no question of *three* lions, for no three beasts are ever exactly alike. Are there then three representations of *one* lion, you ask? No, no; I do not see my way to going as far as that. I do not see my way for the present to going further than affirming that they constitute three representations of *lion!* [O blessed accent of triumph!]. But how blazon a fact that carries us into the highest regions of metaphysics, that sweeps us into the very heart and centre of the doctrine of universals. How indicate a subtlety, etc." I suppose he really was without equal among his British contemporaries in minute and voluminous

of title-page). Cum indicibus locupletissimis nominum et rerum, etc.

knowledge of the noble science, for, being a linguist, he was familiar through and through with the heraldry of all European countries. And if he was *facile princeps* in the science of arms, I doubt if he had his equal either in the science of seals. Later on he became the founder and first president of the London Sphragistical Society, 16, Adelphi Terrace, and his portrait, in oils, hangs over the lovely Adams mantelpiece in their library. The Society has been a success, and, according to the learned in such matters, has supplied a want.

When my father first began to taste the sweets of antiquarian lore, and found that he belonged to a family the history of which by itself could occupy him for the rest of his days, he took steps to get into touch with the elder branch, for the two branches had held no communication since 1740. The reconciliation was most cordial, and he was invited to complete the family tree. He was able to show his cousins that his own immediate forbears had all married the daughters of gentlefolks, and if gentle, then noble, and if noble, then armigerous. Thus it appeared that in the whole known pedigree of the Mavourez, quite complete from the reign of Richard I, defective here and there

before that, just as there was not a single mixed marriage, so was there not a single non-armigerous marriage. The antiquarian mind of my father was dazzled by this vasty ocean of *sang azur*, as much as were my eyes as a child by the myriad, exquisitely coloured coats of arms on the pedigree which covered the greater part of a wall in his sanctum. I like figures, but I should shrink from working out the great sum of how many quarters I am entitled to!

My father, at the age of twenty, inherited a handsome fortune and a partnership in the Casauban Bank. After two uncomfortable years in the city, in which his utter lack of business ability was manifest from the first day, he sold his share in the bank to the existing partners. He had already married—a youthful love marriage characteristic of the family—Donna Bona Cavalca, of the ancient Pisan house of Cavalca, my incomparable mother. His income at the time must have been quite £5,000 a year. I have never properly understood how he came to lose the greater part of his fortune. He was utterly alien by temperament either to speculation or the greed of gain. But he would do anything that an antiquary told him, and I rather suspect that

a certain rascal with antiquarian tastes persuaded him to try doubling investments to the profit of one and the loss of the other. Much money was sunk in quarries, and was never yielded up again by the quarries. But he appears to have taken fright before he was quite ruined. It must have been his own idea—it would be like his idea of good finance—but he invested what was left him in annuities, thus cutting himself off from the possibility of leaving a penny to wife or children. He excepted, however, £4,000 in cash for "necessary expenses," or "to meet any crisis," but which finally chiefly went in books, MSS., engravings, illuminated miniatures, and seals and their matrices, now in Adelphi Terrace. Rigid economy was to be the order of the day. We gave up Harley Street, warehoused our furniture, and went abroad. For me this was a fortunate circumstance. We spent some years on the Rhine, moved to Tours for a year, and ended our Continental life between Bruges and the Hague. It is for this reason that I speak French, German, and Netherlandish. It was my mother's particular wish that we children should speak her language like our own, and from the first we had an Italian nurse, Teresa. But for sphragistical reasons we never lived in

Italy. We went there several times on visits, and I can remember a lovely spring spent at the Villa Cavalca, near Calci, where she was born.

That same mother of mine, whom I can describe as literally of sainted memory, was the most beautiful character I have ever known. No person formally consecrated to God's service has ever seemed to me quite so perfect. There was nothing about her to show that she was deeply religious: she would quietly ignore most talk about religion, for religion is not a subject of conversation with Italians. But if the mainspring of her goodness was hidden, there was everything about her to show how fine was the quality of that goodness. She made goodness attractive to me from earliest childhood. I was quick, impulsive, fond of play and amusements: some teachers of religion would have driven me into dangerous mischief. I could have loved goodness for her sake only, but she knew how to put goodness on its own high and true plane, even to a child. I remember, when I may have been about six years old, sitting on her knee one evening in the dusk, my arms round her neck, I took a deep, strong, childish vow to myself that I would always be good for Christ's sake. And the effects of that

vow remained and worked within me till I was past man's estate, and when suddenly it became obscured in a terrible darkness, such had been its sanctifying potency that I fell not merely to earth, or into the bowels of the earth, but into the very depths of lowest hell itself.

My mother's favourite spiritual reading was Père Caussade, on the *Abandon à la Providence Divine*. She would read and expound Père Caussade to us children (I had two sisters), and thus from a very early age I became watchful and observant of all happenings in my life, trying to detect in them "l'action de Dieu" and the Will and Wish of God. Thus, unlike people in the world to whom D.V. means little more than "God permitting," I used to try to ascertain what God desired and ordered me to do, and this custom, to which I was very attentive, does much to explain the sunny, cheery, absolutely happy life I had until I was overtaken by the eclipse. My mother also coached us, so to speak, most thoroughly in Rosmini's *Maxims of Christian Perfection*, and to him, too, I owed much of my early contentment.

We had lessons from a German governess. I was from the first very quick at learning, so long as there was no question of book-learning.

For reading I had no turn or inclination, but I could stand being read to for hours. I doubt if any man of my opportunities and education has read so little. Indeed, in comparison with other men, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that I have done no reading at all. Without question I had an unusual, to be truthful I may even say a remarkable memory, and so long as I heard things I seldom forgot them. My mother read aloud to us most constantly,—scripture history, history, fairy tales, ballads, the Lives of Saints and so forth. All this I allowed to sink into me, and never forgot. Most of her reading was done in her own melodious Tuscan. My chief delight—my treat—was the Lives of the Fathers of the Desert, the *Vite dei Santi Padri*, in the lovely old Tuscan of the holy Friar, Domenico Cavalca, of the Order of Preachers, from whose family she was descended. She also read us the *Fioretti* again and again, but the *Santi Padri* remained my favourite. Up to the time I went to school at the age of eleven, and even afterwards, when home for the holidays, would she read to me to my heart's content. For all which may Heaven bless her! Without her what would I have known worth knowing, or what

would there have been within me on which my heart could feed?

* * * * *

As a child I was a bit dreamy and imaginative, in spite of the strong commonsense that was there all the time. And, indeed, I cannot see why the two should not go together. At Aix-la-Chapelle we lived in the Hochstrasse, on the first floor over a shop. I was about four when we came here: it was our first halting-place abroad. I remember that one evening, looking out of the nursery window—it was already dark—I saw a figure in the sky. There was no light round the figure; all its light was from within. The face and the shoulders only were visible. The head was covered with a white linen monastic veil, like the veil of a Tertiary. The figure was very still and composed, the face wonderfully benign. I was too young to feel any astonishment, and I certainly felt no alarm. It vanished suddenly, and the night seemed very dark. I saw the figure again, four or five times. I called it God. The face was brighter than ever within: it was like a great and glorious lamp poised in the black dark night. The last time I saw it the face was illumined from within as by the

glory of the sun; the stars were shining bright all round; the crescent moon hung just below. Only years afterwards did I learn the words *Mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus ejus, et in capite ejus corona stellarum.*[5] I never saw the face again, but in the place where it had appeared I used to see a shimmer of white light and little tongues of red flame rising quickly and vanishing almost at once.

Another time,—it was about three years later, we had moved to Bonn, I had just turned seven—I remember one evening late, sheltering on the Kreuzberg from a storm with my sisters and our nurse Teresa. Then for a while afterwards we stood watching a wonderful play of summer lightning. Flash after flash leapt over the skies from Cologne right away over to the Drachenfels. I remember my sister Betty saying, "We shall see right inside Heaven soon!" And then a very bright flash began and stood still in the sky high over the Rhine, towards the Drachenfels. I saw inside it a shore of golden sand and a silver sea beyond, and on the sand stood a woman facing me. She was wearing a white dress and blue mantle, and on her head was a white veil like the veil of a Tertiary. Her face was the same as

[5] Apoc. xii. 1.

that which I had seen over the Hochstrasse in Aachen, but the brightness now was all around her, and not from within. In her arms she held a lovely curly-headed babe. He was dressed in a little white shirt, and had a resplendent halo round his head. Over his left arm hung a sheaf of yellow corn; his chubby little right hand was lifted up in the act of blessing; he leant down towards me with a smile in his eyes,—and then the flash finished, and the heavens, as it were, closed. Flash after flash began to play again, but he did not come back. I was not greatly surprised at what I had seen. My father had from earliest childhood poured into my ears stories of the visions my ancestors had seen, and I knew that St. Gideon had beheld a Royal Infant in the skies. And assuredly I was not in the least alarmed at the vision. I remember saying to myself as we walked home: "Why, it was Holy Mary at Aix all the time!"

I had not told my mother about the face at Aix-la-Chapelle, but I told her what I had seen in the summer lightning, high over the Rhine. I could not understand at the time why she suddenly burst into tears and left the room, nor why, when she came back, she pressed me so close to her, rocking me backwards and forwards on her knee, nor, least of all, why her

hot tears began to fall again on my face. She could paint and illuminate beautifully. A week afterwards she gave me this, done by herself. [He produced from his pocket a lovely little picture of the Infant Jesus, brilliantly, almost daringly coloured. He is dressed in a little white shirt, holds a sheaf of yellow corn over the left arm, and is blessing with the right hand. He is sitting on a roof with big Italian red tiles, surrounded by the trees usually found in an Italian villa garden. There are low blue hills behind, and a flaming sky above.] No doubt there is symbolism in all you see, which I don't profess to understand. I know that the palm tree stands for the Cross, and its fruit for Him Who hung upon It.[6] If you are learned in such matters, I daresay the Canticle of Canticles would give you a clue. But why citrons and not pomegranates? Just look at the back of the little picture. She has printed in finely drawn Gothic characters: ET IN TEMPORE VESPERI ERIT LUX: And at nightfall there shall be light. What a knowledge of Holy Writ she had! This text, no doubt, has reference to the lightning I had seen late in

[6] *Dixi: Ascendam in palmam, et apprehendam fructus ejus.* I said: I will go up into the palm-tree, and take hold of the fruit thereof.—Cant. vii. 8.

the evening, and it may have reference to the supernatural light in darkness in the day that is neither day nor night.[7] "Keep this always," she said. And then she explained for the first time: "Your name means Christ-bearer. Jesus wills that you should carry Him in your heart right across the dangerous stream of life. Let this little picture always remind you of His loving desire."

After this she did other beautiful little coloured drawings for me, and first of all the Child Jesus in a purple mantle lined with ermine, wearing a big imperial crown and holding the orb and sceptre, just as He is said to have appeared to St. Gideon Mavourez in the sky above Acre. Then she did me coloured adaptations of nearly the whole of Anthonie Wierix' series of engravings of the Heart, each showing the Child Jesus with much energy doing some good work in or about a heart. She has greatly spiritualised Wierix. Look at this one, which I like almost best of all the series. It represents a vigorous golden-haired Child in filmy pale-blue tunic, vigorously sweeping the vermin and unclean beasts out of a heart. It moved and influenced me almost miraculously

[7] Et erit dies una, quæ nota est Domino, non dies neque nox; et in tempore vesperi erit lux.—Zach. xiv. 7.

at a moment when the Pit threatened to close its mouth over me for ever.

Close in my affections, however, runs another drawing representing the Child Jesus striking a golden harp in the act of praise inside a human heart. He is dressed in a delicate rose-coloured tunic, and stands upon silver clouds. The heart is filled with an azure sky, fretted with pearl. Round His head is a noble halo, and His figure is entirely encompassed by the splendours of a majestic vesica. Above the heart hovers the Holy Dove, glorified, sending light and grace into its depths. Look for a moment at the sweet little picture. What exquisite colouring! She might have founded a new school of religious art, and saved the sanctuary from many a degradation. On the back she has printed in her delicate Gothic characters: DOMINUS DEUS TUUS IN MEDIO TUI FORTIS: IPSE SALVABIT. GAUDEBIT SUPER TE IN LAETITIA: SILEBIT IN DELECTIONE SUA: EXULTABIT SUPER TE IN LAUDE. The Lord thy God is within thee, mighty: He shall save. He will rejoice over thee in gladness: He will be silent in His love: He will joy over thee in praise.[8] Again I say, what a marvellous knowledge of Holy Writ! Are there any-

[8] Sophonias, otherwise Zephaniah iii, 17.

where else women who can quote the Minor Prophets? Not in Italy, certainly.

* * * * *

Facts and experiences which cannot well be explained—I call them appearances—occur in many old families. They are of long standing, and do not vary much from the original type. The old family goes on experiencing and quietly believing. It has no wish to make these heirlooms public, but it is not at the pains to correct the extravagant views of them that gain currency. To you, because it seems essential, I speak of these things. I have told you of my childish experiences. And I have told you of the great vision of St. Gideon, hermit. You should perhaps also know that our history is full of stories of visions and appearances in which mysterious lights play a great part. It is said that when a Mavourez first meets his true love, he sees a pure light playing round her head. This is vouchsafed him as an assurance that his love is approved in Heaven. It may appear again, especially to reaffirm and encourage when the course of love is not running smooth, but only if the fidelity of both lovers remains perfectly unshaken. It is seen on their wedding day, but after that no more.

There is a doggerel couplet that bears out the story:

> When the shimmering light shows from above,
> Deep and pure is Mavourez love.

More than one of the Carolean poets has sung the pathetic loves of Orlando Mavourez and Lady Lettice Warham, and the greatest of them all refers to the pure flame that played about her virgin head when her boy husband was called from before the Altar to fight for the King's cause. He was a youth of rare beauty and comeliness of person, and she a flaxen-haired child of smiling grace and dimpling loveliness. Like Romeo and Juliet, the Mavourez love young and marry quickly. Orlando and Lady Lettice found a courageous Friar Laurence to make them man and wife at eighteen and sixteen. Orlando parted from his bride at the foot of an improvised altar in a Recusant farmhouse, called away by a special message of Lord Francis Villiers to rendezvous in haste with "divers other young noblemen." She stood at the farmhouse door in her white satin bridal dress, and as he turned on his horse to bid her a last adieu, waving his sword and gaily shouting the Mavourez battlecry of *Le Roy*, he saw the light shining brightly round

her flaxen ringlets, and he knew that they would love unto the end. Alas! poor boy! The end came next day. He was killed in the skirmish at Nonsuch Park (July 5, 1648), gallantly fighting against heavy odds, backed against a tree, side by side with Lord Francis Villiers, a boy like himself, and he might equally with Charles Ca'ndish have been sung as "the young, the lovely, and the brave."[9]

Terrible is our story when love makes shipwreck and the light fails. Here again there is the warrant of a doggerel distich:

> Dies on her brows the golden flame,
> Mavourez love doth end in shame.

During the Elizabethan persecution Peregrine Mavourez loved the only daughter of a house with a very noble past. Her father conformed to the new religion to save his estates. The daughter resisted bravely for a time, and would have defied Church and State to marry her lover. But even in those days it was not always easy for young people of eighteen to get married against their parents' wishes. After five years of waiting she surrendered, as if by evil enchantment, to the influence of a fanatical divine with Genevan notions, who now held the

[9] Waller's Epitaph to Colonel Charles Cavendish.

village living, and fell into the extremes of fantastic Puritan mysticism. She told her lover that she was renouncing him for something higher. There was no light about her head when they parted. He himself suffered a complete eclipse, falling into the wildest dissipation, and sinking down into the nethermost depths of card-sharping and cheating.

Mavourez love doth end in shame.

He was struck down in a drunken night brawl, but lived for two days. There is no record of any repentance; one can only hope that the great merits of St. Gideon and his ancestors may have saved him at the eleventh hour.

And now enough, and too much, of family history.

* * * * *

My childhood passed away swiftly, a dream of happiness, and like a true Mavourez, I responded to the romance of the romantic lands in which we lived. I knew many German ballads and hymns by heart, and learnt the lovely Rhineland legends from our German governess. From nine years old to eleven we lived at Bruges, and when I came home for the holidays we had moved to the Hague, for

heraldic rather than sphragistic reasons. I took to the Netherlandish tongue with delight —the blood of the Van Wissenkerckes, I suppose, stirred within me. Soon I began to pick up ballads and hymns from our old Flemish maid. My favorite was a song that told of a day's gambol in the fields of Wee Jesu and St. Johnnikin. It has hummed in my brain ever since.[10] At the Hague, I remember being taken to the theatre and seeing Vondel's tragedy of Gijsbrecht van Amstel. The sonorous moving language of the great ode to the married state which occurs in this play, rang in my memory even then, but only in part. When I was seventeen I wrote it down and never forgot it again. It tells of my ideal of the married state. When I was twelve years old my father definitely abandoned life abroad, and settled in Woburn Place, Bloomsbury, where any defects in the glamour of the address were amply made up to him by the near neighbourhood of the British Museum.

* * * * *

At eleven years of age I was sent to a good Catholic school in England. School was a surprise, but I got hold of the lay of the land in a

[10] I give a translation of this lovely old religious ballad at the end of the book.

day, and hardened at once into the matter-of-fact, wide-awake, self-assertive sort of chap I really was. The romanticism of the Rhineland, the sentimentalism of the Netherlands, grew faint. I warmed to the school, and the practical hard-headed Van Wissenkercke came out in me strong. I did well at school, without doing any serious study. Figures I took to at once with real delight, and from the first I always got full marks for arithmetic. The Latin I learnt remains with me still, though I have not since opened a Latin book other than a missal, a psalter, and the Imitation. I got plenty of prizes, especially for athletic sports, for I was active, wiry and strong beyond my years. My life at school was immensely happy. Perhaps I was a bit too keen about fighting, but many of my forbears have done little else. I was, as far as I understand it, absolutely good while at school: in fact, some of my fighting was about decency and good conduct. I was religious, of course,—again as I understand it,—but I don't think anyone would have guessed it. I was at a Catholic school, and religion was there in plenty as a matter of course. We all took our turn at serving Mass, and there were Catechism classes and regular Confession. But, as is the way with a lot of

gentlemanly boys, we took it all quietly and as a matter of course. As for myself, I don't consider I had, or have, any religious *feeling*.[11] All the same, I simply loved the Church, and was immensely proud of being a Catholic. I would then, as I would now, cheerfully have given my life for the Faith: then, as now, I feel that that is about all the good I could do for religion. I fully realised the extraordinary goodness of God to me, and was deeply grateful in my heart. But I had no active bubbling stream of high feelings on the subject, and nothing to offer Him in return except my attempts at decency and good conduct. As to prayer, or what is called mental prayer, I simply had no gift whatever. I could ejaculate petitions when I was in need or trouble, and I had a regular petition about the great business of my life: keeping good. Otherwise I had to fall back on prayers and psalms and litanies which I knew by heart, and especially on the comfortable, even-flowing, musical Rosary. I think I may say that at school I was both good and religious, though even my most intimate chum did not know it. I came away from

[11] I know what the speaker means, but here I can't quite agree with him. The strong common sense was there, but the finest feeling went along with it.

school knowing the essentials of my religion wonderfully well. That was owing to the oral teaching and to hearing so much Catechism repeated by other boys. I enjoyed dogma. Wonders were to be looked for in the Divine Economy, and the wonder of dogma appealed to me by its reasonableness. I realised, perhaps with a fullness beyond my years, that the Catholic Church alone represented God's Order upon earth, and that to fall from it was to fall into mere imitations not willed by Him, or into simple chaos. Then I was matter-of-fact, and the Catholic view of God's Order appealed to me as commonsense and tangible. I suppose in any other religion I should have found myself an outcast as a slave to the concrete and a foe to the ideal.

In these happy school days, full of boisterous fun and the serious business of athletics, I never gave a thought to a future profession. God, I believed, would indicate. My mother's teaching that the Will of God could be clearly known was my beacon then, and has been since. If an event presented itself without my seeking it, without my taking one thought to bring it about, that might be safely looked upon as a manifestation of the Will of God. When I have acted on this doctrine it has never failed me.

Once a man has the profession which God intended for him, he lives in the daily discharge of God's Will, and he should continue in the duties of that profession until there is an equally clear sign that he is to change. "Ces devoirs sont la manifestation la plus certaine de l'Ordre de Dieu," says Père Caussade, "et rien ne leur doit être préféré,"[12] and "the first thing," says Rosmini, "which the Will of God lays down for the Christian is to fulfil with fidelity, exactness and alacrity, all the duties of his state." [13] A man's life, however prosaic his profession,—though I cannot admit that any profession is really prosaic,—a man's life becomes divine because ordered according to God's Will, and this dutiful attention to the divine dispositions will obtain him extraordinary blessings,—and especially the blessings of peace and a regular, full, happy life,—if only he observe the divine commandments also, for they are no less a manifestation of the Divine Will.

* * * * *

When I was about fourteen, and while at school, my matchless mother died. I cannot very well speak about this even now. There

[12] *Abandon,* 9th edition, 1886, vol. i., p. 16.

[13] *Maxims of Christian Perfection,* p. 42.

were only ten days to the end of the term, and I was not sent back to school. My dearest mother! She taught me that the more a man was good the more he was a man, and I understood, and believed, and tried to practice. Bona was her name, and *O Bonitas!* the motto most often on her lips. It was she who could interpret the Will of God for me because she was a Saint. Four years later I was to enter on the great event of my life, in which the blessing of God seemed to rest upon me in all its fulness, and with her to guide and counsel, perhaps my life would never have suffered that eclipse which in a manner is enduring to this day.

* * * * *

When I returned home for the summer holidays, being then sixteen and a half years of age, my father informed me that there was a clerkship for me in Casauban's Bank, that he had no influence anywhere else, and could do nothing else for me, that I had shown a turn for figures at school, and that I had better,—in fact, that I was to take it. The salary was only £25 a year, but if I dedicated myself, etc., I might one day redeem the family fortunes and resume the eretime family position in the bank.

I accepted eagerly. Here was just what I had hoped for when the day came: divine action independent of myself. Besides, I actually liked the idea of the work. I had no fear, and I could have no doubt about my fitness for it.

Before going into the bank, I went down to Cleresby Castle, and was ceremoniously invested after Mass with my piece of St. Gideon's cloak. I observed that there was but little of it left, and that the family could hardly hope to reach the middle of the twentieth century. The old stuff crumbled almost at the touch, and my scrap was put in a small silver reliquary, which I am wearing round my neck at this moment. John Cajetan, 17th Lord Cleresby, was at the time at the height of his wild spendthrift career, and it was tacitly understood that everything which related to the sacred customs of the family should be carried out by his brother, the heir, the Hon. Kenelm Mavourez, formerly Colonel of the Duke of Modena's bodyguard.

My first day in the bank showed me that I was not mistaken in the opinion I had formed of it, and I took to the work at once. The atmosphere of brisk activity, the clink of the gold, the swish of the notes, the constant coming and going of customers and clerks, the long columns of additions which I could do with

lightning-like rapidity; and then the crowded busy streets of the city, through which I threaded my way with a bulging case of bills of exchange, and later on with large sums of money, intoxicated me, and I thrilled to the work. I was observant, and my Flemish level head and Italian quickness stood me in good stead. By keeping eyes and ears open, by a certain natural aptitude I had for plumbing essentials and grasping first principles, I quickly acquired a knowledge of banking business far beyond the opportunities of a budding clerk. At the end of six months my £25 a year became £40, and old Casauban wrote my father a note to say that I was a very promising bank clerk, and he would keep his eye on me. I was elated. By the time I was twenty-one, I resolved, I should have at least £300 a year, and by the time I was thirty I should be a partner in the Bank, even though I might not have a stiver of capital to put into it. I was certain of success. I had the ability right enough, and the only other thing required of me was that I should conform to God's Will, keep His commandments and lead a good life. Then *omnia quæcumque faciet prosperabuntur*. People on very high planes may be tried in the fires of adversity and utter ruin and come out pure

silver: ordinary mortals are suffered to prosper so long as they are good. I was an ordinary mortal, and I looked forward to prosperity. It was in my power to be good. I knew exactly what I had to do, spiritually and temporally. Often did I think of my childish vow, and in a very real way my mother was still at my elbow with her encouragement and advice. Her memory was the holiest of human things which I possessed. I was boyishly fond of amusement. The theatre early attracted me. It was all vocal, and its many lessons easily learnt and remembered. In 1873 I saw Irving in Charles I, a great night in my life. My cousin Ludovic took me to the stalls. He was a delightful companion for a Stuart play. A still greater night in my life was when I saw Irving in Hamlet. I thought I had never heard such melodious language as that wonderful old English: German, Flemish, French, Italian, all paled before it. By myself I could afford nothing better than the Pit, but that haunt is associated in my mind with the happiest possible hours. I saw Irving again and again, even from the Gallery when pocket money was scarce, and if the music of the greater part of Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello is still ringing in my brain, I owe it to

him. Nor do I forget the lovely Juliet of Adelaide Neilson and the manly Romeo of H. B. Conway. The Othello of Salvini, the Rip van Winkle of Jefferson, the Desdemona of Ellen Terry, the Ophelia of Miss Gerard, the Rosalind of Ada Cavendish, the Jaques of Herman Vezin, the Old Adam of Chippendale, the Touchstone of Compton, the crowd of great actors and actresses I saw from the Pit in different memorable productions of the School for Scandal—these are all delightful memories of an important part of my education. I became aware, of course, as I walked home after the theatre, of the whirlpool of vice circulating everywhere around me. It filled me with nothing but repugnance. I could not realise how it could be, or become, in any way attractive. I was fond of dancing, too, and kept up athletic sports at Catford Bridge as well as a city clerk can. My love of amusement was absolutely innocent, and did not in the least interfere with my religious duties. I would have given up any pleasure in the world rather than fall out of God's Order, or run counter to His commandments. I never failed once in those early years in weekly confession and communion.

And so, between hard work and wholesome pastimes, a year and a half sped swiftly by, and I don't think there can have been a happier, or more hopeful, or more contented boy in the whole of the vast pulsating city of London.

CHAPTER II

CRESSIDA

One evening, when I had been doing a bit of overtime at the bank, Charlie Bouverie, son of one of the Bouveries, the bank's solicitors, who was putting in a couple of years to learn banking business, asked me if I would like to come along with him to a dance at the schools of a neighbouring City church. Teachers and their friends, quite informal, no dress. Charlie and I frequented a fencing and boxing academy together, went up the river sometimes on Saturday, and were rivals for the half-mile at Catford. Consequently we had become chummy, though not intimate. "I'd love it," I said, and off we went to the dance together.

I was standing in the middle of the room, deliberating on finding a partner for the next dance, when I saw a girl come in with her father, a tall, spare clergyman with an eager, worried-looking face, but an air of great refinement and

distinction. He turned aside to greet a friend, and she, left alone, was quietly gazing round as if in search of acquaintances. . . . I did not see it come: it was there already: not a dancing light: a fixed, white radiance like an aureole. It vanished at once, and I saw two or three little spiral tongues of flame play above her head and disappear ascending. All this in about three seconds. The light did not astonish me, but the girl, O the girl! She was the wonder! She was the glory! What need of the flame of my ancestors to tell me that this radiant creature was my heaven-sent bride, and that God would bless our union for ever. "There she is! There she is!" I cried, exultingly. "Thank God! Thank God! Now I shall always be good!" As I eagerly walked over to where she stood, her eyes met mine, and I do not doubt that she too was saying: "Here he is! Here he is! Thank God! Thank God!" The noblest love is love at first sight, as is amply proved by our family records. I held out my hand and said:

"My name's Chris!——"

"And mine's Cressida!" she replied, radiantly. And thus clasping hands we were in that very instant betrothed for ever, two glowing souls

in one transfused and bound inseverable, for weal or woe.[1]

We moved over to a bench against the wall to sit down. I could not talk. Cressida! Cressida! I was saying to myself. Cressida! Cressida! all that I understood of poetry was in that name. Cressida! Cressida! How the name suited her, too. Her figure was slight, her face pale, the beautiful eyes deep blue; her thick, red-gold hair still hung upon her shoulders, for she was a child just over fifteen, the age of sweet love that cannot err in its choice, whereas I had turned eighteen and came lagging a year or more behind the great historic lovers of my family. Oh, she was heavenly sweet, but rather because of the angelic purity which graced her like the aureole which I had seen for a fleeting second, resplendent round her lovely head. When I saw that I loved her now and for ever, I thanked God that I had struggled to keep my childish vow to be good, for had I been evil I could never have loved so dear and sweet a vision. Now all would go well with me for ever. The priest's love for his Lord, the

[1] Here the music of Vondel's great ode on the married state has obviously got into his language:

Twee zielen gloende aan een gesmeed,
Of vast geschakeld en verbonden,
In lief en leed.

nun's for her Spouse—these are above mine, but mine, too, is holy; mine, too, is a consecration; and so particularly blessed is it, that it is consecrated by a Sacrament rendering it everlasting and indissoluble. Moreover, this was the bride chosen for me by the Will of Heaven, and indicated by a light from Heaven such as had guided elect souls among my ancestors. Such love can come once only, and is never ending.

"Let us go for a walk," I said. "It is impossible to talk here." We went out into Bishopsgate Street without our hats. It was a glorious May evening. The city had nearly emptied itself, and Bishopsgate was like a quiet stream. Still I could not talk. Cressida! Cressida! I could not tire of singing that adorable name to myself. Presently we came to St. Helen's Place, quiet and hushed as a Carthusian cloister, not a soul about, not a sound audible. It was still as old Capulet's orchard at midnight. "Let's go in here," I said. "Here we can walk up and down and talk to our heart's content." And so we did. First it was necessary to tell each other all about ourselves. I spoke first and told her of my father and his studies, of my mother, her beautiful name and her adorable ways. I told her, too, something of my forbears, their high loyalty and chivalry,

their steadfast devotion to the Faith, and how they had died on the scaffold for King, and been martyred at the stake for the cause of Christ upon earth. She, I learnt, was a daughter of the Rev. Cyprian Vaughan. I had heard of him, as indeed had most people at that time, for he had recently done a year's imprisonment for Ritualistic practices. He was rich, but had purposely chosen a parish in the East End in order to work among the poor. He had built schools, and a club-house for men. Cressida, home from school because of an illness, was not going back, but was finishing under his tuition and soon would begin to help him in his work among the poor. His father was old Sir Timothy Vaughan of Llanymdovery, a Welsh baronet. I told her and explained that my father would be content because she was armigerous, and then I had to explain and tell her what armigerous meant, and I told her of the big pedigree on the study wall where her name would soon be written and the Vaughan arms beautifully painted beside our names. Presently we stood still in front of the big house at the end of St. Helen's Place. She went up the two steps leading into the house, and leant against the railings. I stood below and looked up to her, and I could not but think

of a certain balcony in Verona. A misty London moon shone high in the heavens, the stars were only dimly bright. But I felt that no glories such as these could have shone over old Capulet's garden, nor among the ladies of all Verona could there ever have been seen so fair a vision as my Cressida.

"Cressida," I said. (I had never said, "I love you," or, "do you love me?" That golden silence which is greater than silvern speech had made us one from the first. Love with a single breath had fused, soul with soul and heart with heart, together.)[2] "Cressida, we must get married at once. It is the right thing to do."

"Yes," she replied, "I know."

"It should be to-morrow," I continued, "if that were possible. My ancestors often married at seventeen and eighteen, and their fathers did not disapprove because they had done the same thing. Besides fathers have nothing to do with it. Love is right and holy. My father would no more think of disapproving our marriage than he would of putting a veto on my confirmation. But there is one difficulty. My

[2] Vondel again:

Daar zoo de liefde viel,
Smolt liefde ziel met ziel
En hart met hart te gader.

salary is only £70 a year. We can't live on that. The only thing will be for us to live with father and the girls until I'm making enough to keep us. That'll be before so very long. I am just eighteen now, but I haven't been long at banking. In another three years, perhaps before, we shall be quite independent."

"Yes, Chris," she replied; "whatever you arrange is sure to be right. But father is rich, quite rich, I believe. He loves me above everything in the world, and would never dream of refusing me anything so good and right as our marriage. I know so well what you mean when you say it is holy. I am sure he would give us all we required to live on. Did you see him come in with me? He is kind; oh, so kind. I am all that he has in the world. His one wish is my happiness."

"I daresay that would be all right until I'm earning enough," I replied. "But I should prefer to pay him back if you think he wouldn't mind. In any case it is a sacred duty to marry at once, for it is Heaven's Will that we be married, and to delay might be sacrilegious. Of course if there were any real, true, great reason why we should not be married now, we could wait for years. The King's service often separated a Mavourez from his betrothed for

years and years, but that only made their love stronger and holier. Love like ours, which is the great love, with the unmistakable sign of Heaven's Will upon it, will give a man and woman strength for anything—even to part for ever at a very high call, and yet continue to love for ever. But as far as we can tell, we ought to be married to-morrow if possible."

"Dear heart," said this sweet child, for the first time letting fall a tender little expression, "how brave and good what you say! I loved you when we came in at these gates, but without understanding. Now I know you, and I know love, and I could leave you here to-night for years and love you still more when we met again. But all the same I'm glad that we can be married so soon."

I had thought of the money difficulty, but the religious impediment never occurred to me until she reminded me that her father was a clergyman. An impediment it was, but not a difficulty. I had but to show this rare and radiant and spiritual creature, on the one side, l'Ordre de Dieu, on the other the confusion prevailing outside, and she would understand and be at peace with herself and at one with me. Even two glowing souls could not be perfectly conjoined whilst the least stain of con-

fusion or uncertainty troubled the clarity of one of them.

"Cressida," I said, "I am of the ancient Faith as I have told you. You are not, but you are already a Catholic by desire, because we are united in a love which will not allow us to be divided in God and the things of God."

She raised her hand to stop me. "Whatever you are, I am, Chris! I begin to understand. And it is enough for me to hear you speak to know that all you say and wish must be right."

"Yes, I knew you would see at once what was right," I replied. "I don't see why we shouldn't be married in a fortnight. I will find out about formalities. To-morrow evening I will speak to my father about bringing you home. Tell your father everything without loss of time. When shall we meet again, and where? This is Thursday——"

"I am going to an aunt's in Regent's Park on Saturday morning. We could meet at the Hanover Gate side of the lake in the afternoon."

"Couldn't be better. I have a half-holiday on Saturdays. Will three o'clock do? Now I ought to be taking you back to the school. It has struck half-past nine, and you have to go home at ten." We walked back in silence because the chant of the adorable name had begun

again and would not be silenced. "And now, good-bye, good-bye, Cressida. On Saturday all will be arranged, and very soon we will be joined together beyond all possibility of being parted!"

You will not, I am sure, imagine that because I loved this child with all the strength of my soul, and all the reverence with which the Catholic Faith invests a woman, that I ceased to be level-headed or commonsense, or that I slackened in devotion to religion or business. On the contrary, this, my betrothal, was like a species of Sacramental nourishing me spiritually, and as to business, love only strengthened the motive which religion supplied to discharge my duties with fidelity, exactness, and alacrity.

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I had a painful scene with my father on Friday evening. Poor dad! he never got angry, and now did not know how to do it. Absorption in study had made him excitable, too, and when I told him that I was going to get married in a fortnight's time to a clergyman's daughter, and asked leave to bring her home to live with us, he grew incoherent. In his own misery and helplessness he could not pitch upon the right words or phrases of condemnation, and said

many harsh and untrue things which he did not mean. I kept my head, for I gathered one clear, momentous, terrible fact from his speech: that until I was twenty-one I could not be legally married without his consent, and that his consent I should never in any circumstances have. This news did not really disconcert me: in fact it had the effect of calming me. It meant that there was a real, true obstacle to our being married for another three years—but then our love was ready and strong enough for a life-long wait if that were necessary. If there were a legitimate obstacle to our marrying now that was the Will of God, and what more could we wish than to know that Will?

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I went to the trysting place by the lake with a heart composed and at ease. But I found a very sad and troubled Cressida there. Though the sun was shining brightly, faintly I saw about her brows the reassuring light, and was more than ever calmed. She came hurrying towards me eagerly. "Oh, Chris, Chris!" she cried, "I've had such an unhappy scene with poor father. I was so full of peace and happiness on Thursday night that I told him everything when we got home. He cried,

Chris. He threw his arms on the table and sobbed. It was terrible for me to see. Only think of it: I have no brothers and sisters, and mother died ten years ago. I am simply everything to him and of course I love him dearly. And then he got in a terrible rage, and I had never seen him angry before. He said cruel and untrue things about you: that you were an adventurer and wanted to marry me for money. (I didn't even know that I was entitled to money through mother when I came of age.) He said that when he and grandfather were dead I should be the heiress of Llanymdovery, as there was no one else left, and would I throw myself away on a miserable bank clerk? And then I got angry, and told him how your ancestors had died on the scaffold for the King and been martyred at the stake for our Lord's cause upon earth. But he was most of all beaten down when I told him you were a Catholic and that I was already a Catholic by the baptism of desire, and I should soon be received by a priest. He put his hands before his face and groaned aloud. I was cut to the heart to see him so miserable. Till Thursday night he was all the world to me, and I am still all the world to him. I pitied him with all my heart, and tried to comfort him by telling him

how good through and through you were. But he got very angry again, and forbade me ever to see you again, and forbade me to leave the house. I told him that I loved you which meant that it would be wrong and wicked to give you up. I said that I had passed my word to meet you to-day, and that I would keep my word. I had to escape this morning while he was in church, and have been waiting here ever since. He told me that I could not be legally married till I was twenty-one without his consent. Oh, then, Chris, for the first time, my heart gave way. If that is true what is to become of us?"

"Cressida dearest," I answered, "come, let us sit down and talk quietly. I, too, have had a stormy scene with my father, and have learnt that people can't marry without the consent of their fathers till they are twenty-one. If that is the case, and I will make quite sure of it, there is nothing to fret or worry about. Unhappily in these days there is no saintly Friar Laurence who, recognising that true love is from above, would join a pair of true lovers together in holy matrimony in spite of parents' wishes. Your father and mine may be wrong about the law. In that case we will marry, and I know my dear cousin Ludovic would

take us in till I earned enough. But if they are right, well then, dear Cressida, it is nothing to us if we have to wait five and a half years till you are twenty-one. It would be nothing to us never to see each other till that blessed day. Love would be a poor and paltry thing indeed if it should die without meetings and talks. Of course to continue to see each other in opposition to your father's wishes would be impossible misery for you and him. Our love, which is the high and holy love, is capable of any strain. No, since there's no help, promise your father not to see me again till you are twenty-one, and tell him that I shall make no effort to see you either. Don't bind yourself never to write to me: it might be an absolute necessity that we should communicate: but assure him there will be no regular correspondence. There, I know how brave you are, Cressida. But there is nothing to fear: it is the manifest Will of God that we should marry: now we walk side by side on different paths: if we never swerve from our duty these paths will meet at the end of five and a half years. And now come, let us start back for your home. Think how anxious your father will be at your long absence."

We went by train to Moorgate Street, and

I walked with her along the Whitechapel Road as far as the street which led to her father's rectory. I stood and watched the slim graceful figure, angelic in its exquisite purity, hurrying down the gloomy, grimy street; the faint sunbeams playing on her red-gold hair, as I had there seen the light of another world on our first meeting. I was only to see her twice more in my life. Alas! for the pity of it! Alas! for the tragedy of it! The convenient phrase, so often a cant phrase, was about to rise to my lips: the judgments of God are past finding out. But here it was a case of fault, and wicked fault on my part, and the judgment of God was most comprehensible and just.

CHAPTER III

ANXIETY

What I have told you just now of my love, bald and prosaic as is the vesture, will strike many people as the immature vapourings and yearnings of youthful fancy. I am an old man now, and looking back to that time I can see no fancy in it, but only exalted fact. The love I had at eighteen I approve in the evening of life with all the strength of my soul. What I call the high and holy love comes only to extreme youth: if embraced then, no unlawful love will ever enter the sanctuary. Love is one of the great bulwarks of religion. Preachers do not champion it enough. Love alone can make a truly religious life in the world possible. The man who truly loves is as reasonably safe to go straight as it is given to a man to be in this valley of tears. Young love is the sanctification, young marriage the salvation, of generous youth that would keep intact the Christian ideal of daily life: either that, or the religious state: there is no other way. The

age limit has often been a terrible weapon for evil in the hands of ambitious and unscrupulous elders, whose one thought is material advantage. Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder: and equally whom God hath elected to be joined let no man *keep* asunder. And if any man say that this is just as young and immature as what I held at eighteen, I can only answer—Blessed be God Who has preserved the fervour and faith of youth in a life that for long suffered eclipse and tribulations without end, *multas et malas*, as you shall presently hear.

* * * * *

Two years passed quickly. Loyal to our compact I saw nothing of Cressida, nor had we found it necessary to exchange a single letter. From the day that I first saw her I began to rise rapidly at the bank. I was now twenty. My salary was £200 a year; I might reasonably hope that it would be £300 next year. I got known at other banks and soon saw that I could get better pay elsewhere. But no indication that I was to change came from the one source which more than ever I continued to keep before me. Besides, I felt sure of my partnership, and, at that time at all events, I liked much better the idea of being a junior

partner in Casauban's than of being manager of a large joint stock concern. This is a truthful history, and I may as well say that without doubt I had a touch of natural genius for finance. I had dropped a casual suggestion to a senior clerk for the investment of money at a time of panic when the most level heads went astray in judgment. He snubbed me as I deserved, but reported the suggestion to old Casauban as coming from me. It was acted upon, and proved entirely successful. The money about to be invested in securities which proved a total loss, was saved. This got me considerable *kudos*, and from that time on I was consulted now and then, half in jest, half in earnest, about investments. It also earned me the dislike and ill-will of the youngest partner, Mr. Jarrett, which I was to feel seriously later on.

It was about this time that young Paul Casauban came into the bank, as you have told in your book. He took to me at once, rather too eagerly. He used to pour out to me about his ideals and ever-changing nebulous religious views. I had never been intimate before with a soul living in the land of confusion. It was pathetic to me in the extreme, and I found myself greatly drawn to him. I spoke to him

of the Order and Will of God, but he seemed quite incapable of understanding. At length all his fine notions failed him and turned to Dead Sea fruit. I saw that the pit was opening to receive him and held his hand tightly. But he slipped from me and fell into the dark, eddying whirlpool of London's vice. Not for long, and perhaps I had something to do in drawing him out and leading him into God's Order. I should like to think so. He has been magnificent as a Catholic, and is now so far above me that I can hardly understand him.

One thing lay heavy on my conscience, so that I may say that love brought me the first moral disquiet of my life. I had not thought of it at my last crowded meeting with Cressida, but I thought of it immediately after. No decision had been come to, no arrangements made, about religion. She had so luminously the *anima naturaliter Catholica*, that I felt sure the baptism of desire would last through the period of waiting. But that was sentimentality, and I am matter-of-fact. By temperament too, I hope, by conviction certainly, I was absolutely straight. I could see straight and walk straight. The straight thing was to write and tell Cressida to become a Catholic then and there, and she would have done this,

just as she would have married me, in spite of a legion of fathers. It would have meant five and a half years of acute torture for her: daily to hurt the father she so loved, daily to suffer his reproaches—for though a good man he was fanatical where Catholics were concerned—I kept turning away from the picture which daily forced itself on my vision. If I had seen Cressida again, I am sure principle would have re-asserted itself and I should have said: to wait, to live outside in confusion after the call to enter l'Ordre de Dieu, is craven, is sinful: he who considers father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. But I had promised not to see her again, and had sent my pledge to her father that I would make no attempt to do so. To write: I was sure of myself speaking, but if I wrote should I not only perplex, confuse, afflict, and would not the letter almost certainly never reach her hands? Perplexity troubled my spirit, and for the first time in my life I felt a symptom of weakness and helplessness. I flinched for a second before clear principle, and declined for a moment from the straight thing. And then—oh greatest of all man's delusions, oh fatal and most common of snares—I soothed my conscience by leaving it to God, when He had in reality left it to me.

All the misery and tragedy of my life came from this one act of faithlessness. But the fault was mine. I had the knowledge. I had the grace. I knew what to do, and I had the strength to do it. And yet I did not act. Nothing is left me at the bar of God's judgment seat but to put in a plea of guilty. My lapse no doubt proceeded from the human side of my love for Cressida: she was a saint and could suffer: she was a heroine and would be brave: but she was also a dear, delightful, sweet, enchanting English girl, and I turned my face away with a shudder from her martyrdom.

* * * * *

It was seven o'clock on a glorious May evening. I was walking along Bishopsgate Street on my way home, and thinking it was just such an evening when I met Cressida two years before, and I was saying Cressida, Cressida, over and over again to myself, when lo and behold! there she was, coming straight towards me. I was too young before to give a thought to what she wore, but that day I noticed that she was wearing a Lincoln green dress and jacket trimmed with a border of sable, and that it was extraordinarily becoming. She was a woman now, more heavenly beautiful than ever. If our

love had been running true, there should have been a light about her head, however faint. But I saw no trace. We stood stock still. She was the first to speak.

"Chris," she said, "I am glad that we have met. I must speak to you." We had stopped outside the gates of St. Helen's Place, old Capulet's orchard, the spot of all others in the world that held the dearest memories for me. "Come in here," she went on; "we can be more quiet here."

"Cressida," I answered reproachfully, "we are under a bond not to meet and talk."

She smiled as if happy in my sense of honour. "I know, I know. I might have written to you. I should have written to you soon. But it is better that we should talk. I will confess to father at once that we have met and talked. He will approve. Let that satisfy your conscience."

I followed her into St. Helen's Place, but not satisfied. Heavens, should I after all find as I grew older and life more complicated, that I should not always be able to run straight. I refused to believe it. So long as I was true to my Faith and conscientiously followed every clear manifestation of God's Will, I should always keep on that joyful straight road where I had hitherto found nothing but sheer happiness. My chief fault, my one real weakness, had been

to shrink from inflicting upon Cressida the full consequences of a bitter duty. I could remedy that now. I would insist that she immediately become a Catholic, such having been her own manifest desire. Perhaps our meeting after all was by Divine ordinance. "Chris," she resumed, "my heart is so full. I must hear myself tell you how I love you, oh, so much more than on that happy evening when we met two years before. Love comes but once in life: that I see and know: and could never change into love for anybody else however long I lived. It might perhaps give way to a love higher than itself——"

"No, Cressida," I interrupted emphatically, "that is impossible. There is, in a sense, a higher kind of love than ours I know, the love of man or woman for God in the religious state. That is a distinct call, and it usually comes only to people who have never known the love of man and woman. These are the two great loves that make up all Christian love upon earth. One can hardly say that one is higher than the other. That to which God has called a man is the highest for him, and our love is the only high, pure, and possible love for us, because without any figure of speech God has chosen us for each other. If you or I ever had the

thought of becoming monk or nun, it would be a sacrilege ending in the ruin of our lives. Now, since we have met, I would like to say a word about religion——"

"It was about religion that I wanted to talk to you," she interrupted. "Chris," she resumed, "when I met you two years ago, I was just beginning to help father in his good works, but I seemed to know nothing about his religion, for I had only just begun life at home. I knew what it was to be a Christian, but I did not know what it was to be a Catholic. Father has talked to me a lot, and made me read many books. I have learnt that I am a Catholic. I believe it with all my heart and soul and strength, and I am very happy in the thought. And all the more, because as we are both Catholics, there is no change to make when we marry."

I was terribly agitated. Was my weakness, my culpable wickedness after all going to spring its terrible consequences on me? "Dear Cressida," I said, very quietly, "when we last parted if I had asked you there and then to see a priest and be received into the Church, you would have had faith in me and agreed, would you not? You would in consequence have had to endure five and a half years suffering by your father's side in a position so cruel that the imagination re-

fuses to picture it. But you would have endured it like the heroine you are, and God's grace would have been abounding. 'Tis I who have been the coward, false to all I know that makes for your blessedness. And because I did not give you the substance, I see that ever since I left you in your desolation you have been craving for the true religion, and have eagerly seized upon what seems to you to be such. But there is only one Catholicism, and if you are a Catholic then I am not. And in this division our love would simply make shipwreck and founder. Let me implore you, Cressida, let me conjure you: help me to repair my error: come with me now to a church close by here: take the first step necessary, and from that you will not go back. Then go home and tell your father: it will be a hard, long, and bitter struggle, but we shall both come out of the fire unsullied and without a reproach on our conscience."

She was deeply moved and agitated, and could not speak at first. "Dear Chris," she said at length, "I believed what father taught me, believed it, loved it, and I have been practising it in his beautiful church and in his gloomy slums. I cannot in honesty change in a moment. Whereas two years ago I had nothing, to-day I have something. But I seem to see what you

mean: I will speak to father at once: and trust me, dear, I will do what is right cost what it may—even to him!"

"Cressida," I answered, now more calm and composed, "our love, our marriage, is ordained by God's Will. That you be a Catholic is essential to it, and the day I met you I could safely say that God would bring about the necessary change in you, for this was essential to His scheme. But to-day I am conscious of not having done what I could to contribute to the Divine plan. Grave is my responsibility, and you alone can help me to undo the evil I have done. If ever anything presents itself to you as higher, nobler, better, purer, than your love for me and mine for you, think of it as satanic. I long to see you safe from the danger of deception. Cressida, dear heart, take the bold and straight step at once. Then will our love be kept on its first exalted level, then can we pluckily await with a good conscience the day that you are twenty-one."

She was crying gently. I was only to see her once more in this life, and then, too, with the tears streaming down her face, which by that time had become transfigured with a rare sanctity. We parted at the gates of St. Helen's Place, and I watched her disappear down

Bishopsgate, going eastwards towards her father's rectory, certain in my own mind that now she was safe, and that by my words I had undone the mischief of my former weakness.

* * * * *

Two months passed. A letter from Cressida came for me addressed to the bank. It bore the postmark of a small Yorkshire seaside place of which I had heard. She told me that her father had been ailing for a long while, that he had given up his living and work in the East End, and had come to this quiet place for rest, where he would also act as chaplain and spiritual director to a community of contemplative Anglican nuns. She said she loved me, and would love me for ever, and how entirely she realised what I had said, that nothing could ever be higher to her in this world, nor any state more religious, than our high and purifying love. And she added that I should find her ready and waiting for me on her twenty-first birthday. Of religion she only said that I might be sure she would do what was right.

I drew what comfort I could from this letter. But it was only too evident to me that her father had been alarmed by the influence on her of our chance meeting, and that he had deter-

mined to put her out of the reach of danger by leaving London. A gnawing anxiety began to invade my heart. I put it from me as traitorous to Cressida. Three and a half years were still to run before our marriage, but she had told me that I should find her ready on the day; I therefore resumed my former life of hard work with good hope and undiminished energy.

CHAPTER IV

DESPAIR

I FEAR that I am wearying you with all these details, and the repetition of argument that must be so familiar to you. But I will hurry over the three years of my waiting. I was twenty-four. Great had been my success in the bank. I was high up, and had a salary of £600 a year. The time was approaching when Cressida would be free in law to marry. I had not changed in any way. My life was simple and natural. I could still be called good. It is almost necessary that you should know that I was unconscious of ever having committed a mortal sin in my life. I still loved amusement and was fond of the theatre. But I was still content with the Pit, for I was saving hard for Cressida's sake. Athletics I had dropped but I got a bit of a name as a tennis player in the early days. I was also a lieutenant in the Artists' Volunteers, having begun in the ranks.

My father had died in the meantime. My sister Betty had become a Discalced Carmelite

nun, in Religion Sister Mary Evangelista of the Child Jesus. With St. Gideon as the family protector we were naturally partial to the Order of Mount Carmel. Betty was a lovely, brilliant girl, who shone conspicuously in such society as she got. She went to her espousals with the glee of a London society girl making a brilliant love match. It was she who said on the Kreuzberg at Bonn long ago: "We shall see right inside heaven soon." And now, indeed, she does see right inside, for she has been there since she was twenty-seven. There was some public talk about her sanctity after death, and a few beautiful letters of hers to a girl friend appeared in an obscure magazine. It was said, too, that shimmering lights and tongues of flame had been seen by a watching lay-sister as the body lay in her narrow cell. But all such talk has long since ceased. If the lives of all the holy people who had lived were to be written, the world could not contain them. There is some comfort in the reflection. Dear girl, she did not abandon me when the eclipse came, but wrote me half a dozen letters. It was deadly dark where I was, and I did not look at them until I came out into the light of day again. My sister Gertrude, whom everybody thought was going to be the nun of the family, married Gloucester Herald, a

good enough sort, but over solemn. To her my father left all his books, papers, MSS., drawings, etc. Gloucester was eminently fitted to put them to the best use. In the inventory of the "estate" there were some sixty unsold copies of *St. Gideon: Crusader and Hermit.* (One hundred and fifty copies had been printed. The book was richly illustrated and handsomely bound. Published price: three guineas.) Of money there was nothing for anybody. I moved into a lodging in Lamb's Conduit Street, just a single bedroom, for again I was saving hard for my golden marriage day. Besides, what need had I of a sitting-room, who had no taste for books or indoor pastimes. The day's work was hard and often long: whether I came home from over-time, or drill, or the theatre, a bed was all I needed. Even from my father's house in Woburn Place, I always walked to the city and back. I was absolutely frugal and temperate in eating and drinking, and did not smoke more than an ounce of tobacco a week.

As regards religion, I went to confession and communion once a week. Unless prevented by expeditions up the river or volunteer outings, I always went to High Mass on Sundays for the sake of the sermon. I also enjoyed the afternoon preaching at Farm Street where I learned

no end of good and useful things. Ever since I was twenty-one I observed all fast days and the entire fast of Lent. I was tough and wiry, and this meant no difficulty or self-denial to me. My prayers were short enough, and it was chiefly a case of "saying" prayers. I knew there was something much higher, "mental" prayer: only not for me. I always liked priests and sought their society. I used to help our priest with his evening classes two or three times a week, and was more especially useful in the gymnasium he started for boys. I could act, sing, recite, mimic, vamp at the piano, and strum on a banjo, and was in great request among the clergy for penny readings and amateur theatricals. You will see from all this what a full and happy life I had, and all in God's Order. And all the time, too, there was the great love to cheer me and keep me straight, and the song of Cressida, Cressida, rang melodiously within, whether I was working or playing.

* * * * *

It was nearing the 13th, St. Lucy's day, when Cressida would be twenty-one. In fact it was the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, my lucky day, and I had been up early in the morning at Farm Street. I was buoyantly

happy, even beyond my wont. I can realise better now how extraordinarily good God had been to me in giving me so early, from childhood in fact, complete contentment and satisfaction in that manner of life which I can only call His service. Perhaps I took too material a view of it: perhaps I had an unjustifiable tendency then to shy at the word spiritual or mystic: the whole thing—I mean His service—seemed to me so eminently commonsense. But the Faith I held exacted virtue, and I tried to be good. The knowledge I had showed me what God's Will was and I tried to do it. This had been my happy state since boyhood, and now by Heaven's mercy there had been added to it the motive above all others that should keep my feet from falling,—the love of the woman chosen for me in the Divine plan, a great love, an unspotted love, a love, which seeing that it proceeded from above, also passed all understanding.

That day the five o'clock post brought me a letter to the bank. I recognised Cressida's hand, and put it in my breast pocket. I would read the great news in the peace of my lodging. How nobly, she had helped me to keep our pact: we had not met once, we had not once corresponded. To me this had been easy, perhaps not so easy to her, a woman. We were already in

Advent, and could not therefore by the Church's law be married till after the Epiphany. So there would be plenty of time to arrange everything. Quickly I finished my work and started to walk home. It was dark already: a thick yellow fog hung over the city, a cold drizzle was falling. But I was in paradise, and my song of Cressida, Cressida, had never sounded so joyful. I am not emotional or sentimental as you know, but the good news in her letter which lay over my heart seemed to infiltrate into my soul and set it ablaze with joy. And now I am in my solitary room. I draw up the table before the fire. I bring out the letter, open it. There is a printed address at the top, which causes me a cold shiver of anxiety.

St. Agatha's Convent,
Haleham-on-Sea.
December 7th.

I do not fear for you; you are good, through and through and through. How blind I was when first I met you—about religion I mean. I have learnt the whole Catholic faith now, and have embraced it ardently. Our love was great and pure, but I have been called by an irresistible manifestation of that Will of God which you love so, to a love much greater and higher, the love of our Lord Jesus Christ Whose bride I become on the feast of St. Lucy. You will feel this for a moment as a blow, but I, who know your deep, true goodness, your deep religious feeling, believe

that you are called to the same life and will soon follow my footsteps. I did not write to you before to tell you of this, because I could not be sure of myself. I could not believe that I, of all girls, could have been called to so exalted a state. Then, too, it was anguish excruciating to tear you out of my heart. I think only the thought that you were intended for this blessed life gave me the strength to do it. Perhaps you will hate me for a moment. I do not think so. Nor will the step I have taken cause you to turn aside for an instant from the strait way which you have walked so nobly. I know you to be a tower of great strength. Your great, good, deep, true sense penetrated all things so wonderfully and always looked up so high, high, that I know you will very soon be as convinced as I am that this is the Will of God which we must follow or die.

CRESSIDA.

It was a long time before I could get the letter read in full. I broke off in the middle of sentences, began again towards the end, went back again to the beginning. There was actual, physical darkness all round me. Memory began to go and the past grew dim. I believe, at first, that I did not quite realise that she was writing from an Anglican convent. I was certainly quite beyond realising that what happened was my fault entirely, that had I done the straight thing, and let her do the brave thing, when she was a girl of sixteen, she would have suffered torments, yes, but the day of a radiant deliverance would have been at hand. All I realised

was that my life was blasted and might as well end. I remember shouting out loud, and I remember that I, who had never cried in my life, not as a child, not as new schoolboy, threw myself on the table and sobbed and wept aloud in hot, rebellious anger. I remember looking up a moment and seeing the kind, anxious face of my landlady peeping through the half-open door: I pulled myself together, and the door was softly shut. Then I stood up and blasphemed and cursed all that I had ever believed and held dear. A fairy-tale God's Order, a dream God's Will, a dream Holy Faith and Holy Sacrament, a dream the pure love of man for the chosen woman, and goodness, with its intolerable warfare, the most pestilential dream of them all! The darkness around me seemed to grow dense. I would make an end of all these evil dreams and the mad folly of a life of sacrifice. How? I had no revolver. There was nothing for it but the river. Come, I will go. In half an hour the cursed nightmare will be over. But stay—I am a practical man, boastful, even, of his commonsense. Is this quite fair to life? What do I know of life but the puerile imaginations in which I have been stifling life? There is another life, the life offered by the world, the jolly life of vice and pleasure which I had reprobated. The

world spoke of this life as the acme of happiness. My own notion of life had snapped and broken in my hand, leaving nothing but loathsome dust and ashes. Why be such a fool as to take life before trying the life of most of the men I had come across? I have some money; I can easily make more. If this life, too, fails me, then I can make an end of all things. Right: I'll try it. . . . A dark cloud rose up *ex inferno inferiori*, and the light of my life suffered a total eclipse. I rushed out into the black whirlpool of London's vice that night with the dismal howl of "Mavourez love doth end in shame," ringing in my ears, and for a period afterwards I was reckoned one of this nether world's champions, until a pitiful God drove me into the blind-alley of a prison and there once more folded me in His everlasting arms.

CHAPTER V

ECLIPSE

In my altered life the work was still my chief concern. Perhaps I am thorough by temperament. At all events, I was thoroughly vicious. But not once was I ever late for business. My health and spirits suffered, but my work was as well or better done than ever. I moved from my one room in Lamb's Conduit Street and took a first floor in York Street, St. James's Square. Always reasonably particular about my dress, I now began to give the greatest care to my appearance, and soon was spoken of as the best-dressed man in the city. "I believe Mavourez is in love!" said the principal confidential clerk, laughing. I cursed him so vehemently, I stretched out my hands towards him so fiercely, that he turned white with fear. I saw the look of alarm and surprise in the faces of others, and quickly checked myself and apologised. I caught the whisper of a voice in a lull saying: "More like crossed in love!" By dint of curses I managed to control myself. The habit of

cursing was growing on me. I was getting dangerous to myself, and saw that I should need to use the greatest self-restraint. Old Casauban was dead; Paul Casauban was by this time out of the bank: new partners had come into it: Jarrett had bought a considerable share, and though not the senior partner, was now the guiding spirit of the bank. The name of the bank was now changed to Blount, Jarrett and Blounts. On the whole, as I was so absolutely regular at work,—working late, too, most days,—I don't think the change in my life was much noticed except by Jarrett. I could see his little ferret eyes watching, watching, for the opportunity that he saw might come some day now, to be rid of my troublesome, successful presence. Here most of all did I require self-restraint. I had a big roaring devil of physical force in me, and when I saw the ferret eyes trying to bore into my secret, I could have leapt on him and pitched him round the office. But such feelings would not do. Above all things, I needed the bank. Without the bank I should have no work, without work no money, and without money no wild nights. I was intoxicated with this new life, but could only live it at high pressure. Wild and mad at night; grave, sober, judicious, hard-working by

day—the strain was terrible. Sometimes I remembered the Faith that once was in me, and then I believed, and like the devil I was, I trembled. But such moments were rare and passed altogether. After a year I was hardened in vice, and becoming more truly worldly, developed greater moderation and prudence. But the career of vice went on steadily. Jarrett watched, and watched, but I was strong in the approval of the other partners, who knew my worth as a bank clerk.

I was wildly prodigal, and my savings of £700 melted in the first year. The Exchange and Credit people offered me £1,000 a year to go over to them. I made no secret of this, and my salary was raised to £800. I preferred less money and the old place with a chance of a partnership. But I was always in want of money. I borrowed £200 at exorbitant interest from a moneylender. The day of payment came, and I could not meet his bill. He refused to renew, and threatened to expose me. I got one day's extra grace from him. Two courses were open to me. The bottomless depth presented itself first: my position of great trust enabled me to touch the bank's money: with that I could speculate on the Exchange with the certainty almost of making, only the money must be re-

placed within a week to prevent discovery. That would not do, it was risky: besides, it was the bottomless depth, the end to any sort or kind of life. Then I might borrow from Casauban. He would certainly not refuse. I had not seen him since the change in my life. He had written two or three times, asking me to dine alone with him in Manchester Square. His mere existence pinched my conscience. He would talk of the past. He would assume that I was still running straight. Certainly I could not go, and, like a fool, I did not even answer his letters. I was angry at the thought of his existence. But now the bitter pill must be swallowed. Good Heaven! supposing he was away, abroad, in Italy, where he often went. I took a hansom and drove at once to Manchester Square.

Was he in? I asked eagerly. Yes, he was in. Thank God for that. I was shown into the big room at the back, so wonderful for its books. The brown eyes searched mine anxiously. I found him changed; awkward and shy. He was beginning to find out that he was not in his element, just as you have described in your book, but was still far from learning what that element was. He had no small talk for me now, nor I for him. I blurted out that I was in a money difficulty, and asked could he lend me

£200 for three months. "Why, of course," he answered readily. The worst remained for me to say. He still banked with us. I wanted notes, and not a cheque which the ferret eyes of Jarrett would gloat over, seeking to probe my mystery. Casauban produced a cheque book and began to write. The words would not come across my lips: I was a devil, but the rags of a gentleman's feeling still clung to me. I could not say: give me notes. Decidedly I must become more of a cad if I am to support my present life. Almost at once he stopped writing, went across the room to a safe, and returned with £200 in notes. His own fine feelings had divined that I would not like his cheque in my favour to be seen at the bank. I cursed within me blindly.

"Are you sure that's enough?" he asked.

"Quite, quite, thanks awfully."

"Come back to me if ever you get in a difficulty again, won't you? He wished me to speak. I would not. He wished to speak himself. He could not. I saw the longing in his eyes. They seemed to say: you, Chris Mavourez, once my rock and mainstay, have got into the devil's whirlpool. How, I wonder? You saved me, let me save you. But he could not utter a word, could no longer look at me straight for pity's

sake. I seemed to feel the flame of prayer leaping up within him for my soul's weal. I may have cursed. It was a horrible experience. Never again, never again: let black ruin come rather than that I should ever again face him and ask for money.

The three months were nearly past, and I saw no prospect of paying him. I must either pay him, or shoot myself. I knew he would have given me the money cheerfully. But I had not advanced far enough in the transformation into cad. I would rather shoot myself, far, than take a gift of money from him to chuck into the filthy melting pot, where my own money went. I could not go to the moneylender again, for I had already been and borrowed £200. There was nothing for it, I must plunge into the bottomless depth and touch the bank's money. If that resource fails, then there is only death. I took £300 of the bank's money and speculated on the Stock Exchange. I had special information given me, reasoned the thing out carefully, and netted about £600. I could not face Casauban, but sent him the £200 by letter. Once more I was saved. I had recommended the same investment to the bank. My suggestion was adopted, and over £10,000 was made. The partners voted me a bonus of £300.

I was free from money difficulties for six months, and spent all the more wildly.

But at the beginning of the third year of this awful life I was again in difficulties. This time I did not hesitate to use the bank's money. I speculated very carefully, always with success. Once I failed. It was a horrible moment. £300 had to be replaced in two days' time. Curse! Curse! The moneylender whom I knew had failed. I tried two others. They wanted a week for inquiries. It was useless to try a third. Curse! Curse! There was nothing for it but to fly to Manchester Square. It was horrible, horrible. He opened his safe and gave me £300 in notes. Oh, how he longed to open his heart, too. I feared that above all things. He was struggling for words.

"Good-night!" I said: "a thousand thanks, a thousand thanks!" I made towards the door of the library in haste.

"Chris!" he called after me. Oh, horror! There were tears in his eyes, and deep compassion, and loving-kindness. "One word, only one word!" There was a sob in his voice, and angry curses in my heart. I feared and dreaded his one word, and opened the door into the hall. He followed me to the front door. There was no further attempt on his part to say the one word.

He just said quietly in an undertone, "Come to me whenever you are in a difficulty. Don't be downhearted." He would have liked to say, "God bless you," but couldn't, or perhaps divined that any expressions of the kind might have maddened me. And then I had the horrid feeling that the fires of prayer deep down within him had kindled into a glowing furnace. I fled from him in something like terror, with curses on my lips.

Three years of this awful life had passed. After that last interview with Casauban, I distinctly changed for a while and led a quieter life. I needed rest, too, for the strain of keeping regular at work under such horrible circumstances told more and more upon me. I went away by myself for a fortnight's holiday on the Dorset coast. I could not stand three days of it. Something tugged at my heartstrings; my memory, now at rest, went back to the straight, happy, confident days of the past. Then, too, —as with my great patron St. Augustine,[1] so with me, Continence, in her chase dignity, serene and cheerful, rose up before me and beckoned, rose up and showed me, not a multitude of good examples as she had shown to the great Saint, but my own happy life when I was her cavalier,

[1] *Confessions,* viii. 11.

when I gave the best years of my life to doing battle for her crown. Curse it all! This was intolerable. I must get back to crowds again. I went to Newhaven, and over to Paris, where I once more suffered a total eclipse.

Too long, perhaps, have I dwelt upon the dark years of this sordid life, and yet perhaps I should have been more particular so that you might more fully realise the depths to which I had sunk. But if you will reflect on the life I had led for twenty-four years, you will understand that it could not be thoroughly submerged and stifled except in the mire of the deep, where there is no foothold. After my return from Paris, I again began to get into money difficulties. My salary was now £1,000 a year, and there was only one man higher than myself in the bank. I considered my partnership in sight: either that or I would take the Exchange and Credit people's offer of £2,000 a year as their general manager. I now borrowed from an East End moneylender, helped myself, paid back, speculated, won, speculated, lost, helped myself again, speculated again, lost. A dreadful day had come. £600 had to be replaced in two days' time. The time had come to put an end to this dog's life. There was not a ray of hope anywhere. Yes, Casauban. But no;

nothing, nothing, should induce me to go near him again. I took another £200. It was a risky speculation, and it did not come off. £800 must be found by to-morrow. If I am to die, it may as well be for much as little. The bank have made quite enough out of me in their day. One more try. My business deals were always based on sound calculations. I knew of nothing safe on the market to-day. I was reduced to the gambler's resource. I took another £400; plunged—and lost! £1,200 must be found by to-morrow morning. Now what shall I do? Death? I always carried a revolver in those years. Why die? Is not my life very jolly? If I alter methods a bit, I can have quite a good time without all these anxieties. And then I heard Casauban's low earnest voice with its appealing tones: Come to me whenever you are in a difficulty. That decided it. I would go. Why the devil shouldn't I? I would adopt different tactics. I would speak this time, and make a clean breast of it. I would alter the pace at which I was going. There should be no more borrowings, peculations, speculations. I would take my pleasures quietly, soberly. I would be vicious decently. Moreover, I would accept the Exchange and Credit offer of £2,000, and be able to pay Casauban back within a year or two.

Yes, I would go up to Manchester Square as soon as the day's work was through. It was either that, Portland, or death.

The five o'clock post brought me a letter. I could not suppress a loud cry. The chief cashier, and two or three clerks came running up, followed by Mr. Jarrett. I was seized by an uncontrollable shivering fit. "You are ill, Mavourez," said Mr. Jarrett, eyeing me through and through. "You had better jump into a hansom and get home at once. Take care of yourself. Of course we shan't expect you to-morrow. Don't think of coming back until you're all right. I've noticed you haven't been the thing lately." Curse the little beast! I shall soon have done with him.

Ill I certainly was. I jumped into a hansom. York Street, St. James's Square. I would go home first and read the letter, then round to Manchester Square. No, he was usually out for a stroll between six and seven. I would dine by myself at the Café Royal, and then go on to him. The letter! The letter! what did it mean after these four years of hell? Why hell? I've been having a very good time, surely. I had put the letter in my breast pocket as I had done four years ago: this time it communicated a nameless anxiety to my soul. Something, I felt, was

going to happen, nothing good, but my present life was coming to an end. Suddenly I remembered that to-morrow was the 8th of December (my lucky day!), the very day on which I had received the news, years ago it seemed, that Cressida had fallen like a lodestar from the heavens. Cressida! I had managed wonderfully in these years to keep that name from my foul lips, that heavenly vision from my impure heart. The letter! What does it mean? Is she in trouble? I will die for her; but I cannot see her. What is the matter with me? I am shivering all over. Curse it! My heart is thumping against my side. Heart! My heart? What heart? I have no heart. A foul and noisome drain stagnates there where a clear and cooling stream once flowed. My head is splitting. Let me see, I am in a hansom, in the Strand. People are looking at me strangely. What is the matter with my heart? Something is knocking, knocking. I remember it at Lyme Regis, when I fled before it. It was always a Child. It is a Child now. He is wearing an imperial crown and mantle. With His sceptre He knocks insistently. "Son of St. Gideon, let me in, let me in, that I may reign upon my throne within. Let me in." Now it is another Child, knocking, knocking. His face is heavenly sweet. His eyes

laugh. He carries a sheaf of golden corn over His left arm, and with His right hand He knocks, knocks. "Child of St. Bona, let me in, let me in, that I your heart for this my golden sheaf may win. Let me in." I groan in anguish, but am there, secured in a hansom cab, and cannot escape. Yet another Child, and more persistent, this one, than the others. He wears a little pale blue tunic, and carries a large broom. He is strong and vigorous. He knocks loudly with the end of his broom. "Dear Christopher, old playmate, let me in, let me in, that together we may sweep my temple clean. Let me in." Stuff! what stuff! what sickly stuff for a sparkling viveur, for a model man of the world to be mumbling under his breath. He would not go away. He knocked and knocked. "Why did you set me down in full mid-stream? Dear Christ-bearer, old comrade, let me in!" I was getting maudlin, thinking of the nursery and old childish tales. This must stop. I thrust both my clenched fists out of the hansom, and broke into language which at last drove these insistent images away. . . . York Street, at last! Thank God! The corner house, you fool. Can't you see! I paid him double because of my curses, and quickly let myself into the house. The shivering fit was strong upon me. My man,

Beaton, looked scared, and asked if he should go for a doctor. I bundled him out of the room and cursed him for another fool.

Now the letter. I notice for the first time that the postmark is London, S.W. Why London? What has happened? Has she changed to a Convent in London? I turned the envelope over. There was a crest on the back of it: a buck at gaze. Whose crest? How absurd! Though I had death in my veins, trifles rushed into my brain, and I could hear my father's voice in withering scorn denouncing the woman or the priest who should use note-paper with a crest! A ring at the bell. A knock at my door. Curse! Beaton puts his scared face in. "Beg pardon, sir. Mr. Casauban to see you, sir." Casauban! Why? Has he divined? Has he heard of anything impending? I can't face him here. I am at his mercy here: here there is no running away from him. "Tell Mr. Casauban I'm sorry, but I'm very busy. Brought home work from the bank. But I want to see him particularly, and will call this evening after dinner." Good business. At all events, I am sure to find him. That's disposed of.

Now the letter! I tore it open. The address, Llanymdovery House, 36 St. James's Square, the Vaughans' town house. Then, good God,

she is here, near me, round the corner not two hundred yards away! I begin to read. My head is splitting. Lines and letters dance in confusion.

Llanymdovery House,
36 St. James's Square, S.W.
December 7th.

Chris Dearest,

It is four years, since mistaking confusion for God's Order I even bound myself to it by a vow. You had warned me to beware of any ideal that claimed to be purer or more spiritual for me than our own great and heaven-sent love. Heart and mind suffered eclipse, and I actually thought I was doing something pleasing to God by separating from you for ever. Three months ago, after four unquiet years, light came to me, benign and unmistakable. I left the Convent and became a Catholic. Since that I have been living with my old grandfather, Sir Timothy Vaughan, at Llanymdovery. We only came up to town yesterday.

How much, oh, how much you have to forgive me. But how easy it will be for you to forgive. You are full of pity for all creatures, and then so profound and discerning. You lived in God's Order, and it was natural to you to know His ordinances with regard to us. I know that you still have the same great, big, strong, pure heart as when in my miserable weakness I left you. You will have known that it was only an aberration. I know that you have been waiting for my return, constant as you ever were and unchanged, knowing that God would enlighten and bring me back, and now I come back to you knowing God, one in Christ with you as you wished, and to-day your faith triumphs: you see for yourself, what you knew before, that God has not deceived but only tried—you, me,

so that we might both be purified and made ready for His most holy Sacrament of Matrimony. Oh, come for me quickly, Chris, call for me, send for me. My new heart is big and full, overflowing with love for my noble cavalier. But I could wait and wait all my life long for you, just as you have been waiting, waiting, for me now. I say this so that you may see that I now love as you do, and understand what the great love means.

And now Chris, dear heart,—don't refuse; do, do, comfort me at once by sending me a telegram calling me to meet you in old Capulet's Orchard at five o'clock to-morrow. There is no other place in the world so sweet to me, and then to-morrow, you told me, is your lucky day. We will walk up and down there and tell each other all about, just as we did ten years ago. You told me that you had seen a light shining round my head in that dingy old schoolroom where we were betrothed, and I laughed at you. And then you told me the piteous story of the loves of Orlando Mavourez and Lady Lettice Warham, and I believed you. The light was sent to be your comfort, and by it alone you would know that the tie that binds us is indissoluble. Oh, don't fail me. Do come. We will drive home here afterwards, just as if it were after our first meeting, and we were driving to our wedding. Grandad is an old darling. He didn't mind my change a bit. He will bless us, and give me away after the Epiphany is past.

Your loving bride,

CRESSIDA.

P.S. If I don't hear I shall know that you have been kept by important business at the bank. But we shall expect you here in the evening. When shall I ever finish all I have to tell you!

* * * * *

I do not well remember what happened to me after I had managed to piece this letter together. There was a time of unconsciousness, I know. I came to, thinking of Othello and his pitiable want of faith, and I thought of my own mad, senseless want of faith in God's Order. I found myself muttering words from Othello, so familiar to me from old days. . . . Whip me, ye devils, from the possession of this heavenly sight! . . . Blow me about in winds! . . . Roast me in sulphur! . . . Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire! . . . Oh, Cressida! Cressida! dead to me for ever! . . . Oh! Oh! Oh! . . . When we shall meet at compt, my girl, this look of thine will hurl my soul from Heaven, and fiends will snatch at it!

I do not even remember very well what happened to me in those three or four days. Sometimes I cursed and blasphemed all that I had held dear and sacred, just as I had done four years before. And then the beacon of faith would flare up in my heart, and I would tremble like a legion of devils at the thought of the great accompt. Beaton seemed to be coming into the room every minute, more pale and scared than ever, and saying I was ill and would I not like a doctor? And then I remember a doctor coming, and Beaton constantly giving me medicines.

Now what to do? I must get away beyond all possibility of seeing Cressida again in this world. The first thing to do would be to arrange for long leave, so that I could get outside London. As it is, I am nearly next door to her. But was it worth while living? Most assuredly not, but faith tugging again at my heart strings warned me of the Everlasting and His dread canon 'gainst self-slaughter. Long fits of unconsciousness came over me. I dozed and dreamt. Then came to myself, and said it would be Canada or South Africa.

* * * * *

Again I awoke from a doze and realised that it was Tuesday morning. My head was splitting. No doubt about it, I was ill. I couldn't possibly go to business. And then I remembered vaguely that I had been taken ill in the bank, and that they had told me not to hurry back. So that would be all right. I was lying down on the outside of the bed, fully dressed. Could it be possible that I had not taken off my clothes since Friday evening? I will undress now and get into bed. Perhaps a bath would do me good. Beaton put his white face in at the door. His lips were trembling. "There's two men down in the 'all wants to see

you, sir!" But they weren't down in the hall; they were outside on the landing behind him, and they pushed their way into the room. "Mr. Christopher Mavourez," said one of them, "we are police officers, and we hold a warrant for your arrest on the charge of embezzling the sum of £1,200 from Messrs. Blount, Jarrett and Blounts. You must come along with us at once."

I jumped off the bed, calm and collected, headache vanished, pulses normal. In the anguish and torment I had suffered, it had utterly gone out of my head, utterly. Of course, now I remembered: on Friday evening I was going round to Casauban to save myself by borrowing £1,200; on Saturday morning my defalcations at the bank would have been discovered. The hour of Jarrett's revenge had struck.

One of the men advanced and touched me on the shoulder. That completed my arrest. "Right!" I said. "I'm ready!" The elder of the two men then read the warrant, and added pompously that anything I said now might be used in evidence against me.

"All right!" I replied. "You can say that here, in the presence of witnesses, I said I was guilty of the charge specified in the

warrant, and of a great deal more, too, of the same kind that wasn't specified."

The poor man looked shocked—at my folly, I think. We went downstairs. They did not attempt to handcuff me. A four-wheeler was waiting at the door. We got in and drove to Bow Street.

I had felt that the old horrible nightmare of a life was done with, that something else was coming. And here it was. Penal servitude. Most right; most just. And in the noisy growler, as I drove to Bow Street to be condemned to perpetual uselessness in the economy of this busy world, I feebly asked to be numbered among the lowest serfs in His Vineyard. And there, too, in the Strand, almost on the very spot where He had come to me on Friday, I heard the voice of the Child with the broom: "Dear Christopher, old playmate: Open your heart, let me in, let me in, that together we may sweep my temple clean. Let me in." And in the prison cell loud came the knocking again; knock, knock; knock, knock; let me in, let me in. O then at last the floodgates burst, and I broke down and cried aloud: O yes, come, come quickly, dear Child of my childhood; come, sweep my heart, O sweep my heart! And the sweet Child came in great jubilation, and using

the running waters of my tears, swept and swept, until the unclean things that had so long kept leets and law days in His sanctuary, came tumbling out, one over the other, down, down, into the nethermost Pit whence in madness I had summoned them to share with me God's holy temple of the human heart. Benedictus Deus. Tibi laus, tibi gloria, O fons misericordiarum.[2]

[2] *St. Augustine's Confessions,* vi. 16.

CHAPTER VI

SECLUSION

On Thursday morning Casauban came to see me in prison with one of the Bouveries, his firm of solicitors. He asked me not a single question about myself, but began by saying that Mr. Bouverie would arrange for counsel to defend me. I thanked him but told him that I was guilty, that I intended to put in no defence before the magistrate and to plead guilty at the sessions. The solicitor protested fussily and professionally, but Casauban understood me and stopped him. Whereupon he took up his hat and departed.

"Is there nothing else I can do?" Casauban asked.

I reflected a moment. "Yes," I said. "I would like to see a priest, if you can arrange it for me. If possible my old confessor at Farm Street, Father Vandelaer. I don't know how these things are managed in prisons."

A look of relief came over his face. He would have spoken, but the shyness, the awkwardness,

of which you have spoken in your book was becoming more and more marked in him. "May I come back and see you?" he asked, humbly.

"Dear Casauban," I replied, "it is better not. There is nothing that can be done, nothing that should be done. For the next few years, five years, seven years, my life is arranged for. Only think of it: if I had admitted you the other evening, perhaps I should not be here now. But it is better so; oh, how much better so. Your loving-kindness might but have delayed my coming back to God. Here I could not escape Him. If ever I need help, I promise I will write to you. But if you really wish to help me now, pray for me as you were praying last time I came to seek your help."

We shook hands and parted with many things unsaid.

And Cressida! Cressida! she too would know that I was a felon and about to disappear from the ken of men. What was she doing? What was she thinking? And so I had really struck her as a man good and strong, rooted in God's Order and service. And she still expected to find me pure, and straight, and strong as when first she knew me. She was right. Obviously I had the grace, obviously I had the strength. Therefore I need not have fallen. My fall was

wickedness, pure and simple. At least I did not deceive myself.

A letter came from her on Friday morning. I will read you some bits of it. "You will think from my letter that this will make me wish to separate from you. Oh, no, dear Chris, do not think so for a moment. In leaving you, I was guilty of a far worse crime than ever yours could be. Did you not put the torch of Faith in my hands at our first meeting, and yet I sinned against its light. I, and I only, am to blame for what has happened to you. It is my turn to wait now. I am going to work in the Raphael Street Hospital in Bethnal Green. And there I shall wait until you come to take me away. You will come back with a heart as big, and strong, and good as ever it was. I know that your dear Master Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart. And I know clearly that you have already admitted Him. He could not live long away from a heart He loved so much."

I was almost angry with her that she could suppose that love once profaned as it had been by me, could ever be revived and resumed, and I wrote briefly saying all this, and begging her to put me entirely out of her mind as I could never see her again. The fault, I told her, was absolutely mine for having checked her heroic

impulse and stayed her martyrdom when she was a girl of fifteen.

* * * * *

I was brought before the magistrate next day. Charlie Bouverie was in court, and he rushed up to me, regardless of forms. He was in his father's office now. We had not met since my eclipse. He was biting his lip, poor chap; and there were tears in his eyes. I had heard vaguely that he had become a Catholic. And now he is a priest of the Oratory. Why could I not have been instrumental in his conversion? We were always about together. But never yet has it been given to me to lead a single soul out of confusion into order.

"Do you represent the prisoner, Mr. Bouverie?" asked the magistrate, a little sharply.

"No, sir!" replied Charlie, apologetically. The magistrate's look said plainly as possible: then step down, please.

"Are you represented?" the magistrate inquired, turning to me.

"No, sir!"

"Do you intend to be represented?"

"No, sir!"

He then called upon counsel to make his opening statement. It was a brief, straight-

forward exposition of the facts. The first witness called was one of the officers who arrested me. He deponed that after the warrant had been read to me I stated that I was guilty, and had often been guilty of the same offence before. Then came Mr. Jarrett with proof from the bank books, borne out by two other witnesses from the bank, that my defalcations had been practised repeatedly. Then followed poor Beaton, who blubbered in the box and made a very bad witness for the prosecution. (I had sworn at him a good deal, poor devil, but I had also been generous.) That was all, I think. As each witness was called, and at the end of his evidence, the magistrate asked me if I wished to cross-examine, and each time I answered, "No, sir!" Even when the depositions of all the witnesses against me had been read over aloud, he asked me whether I had anything to say, and again I replied, "No sir! except that all that has been proved against me here is true, and that at my trial I shall plead guilty." "That being so," said the magistrate, "you will be committed for trial at the next sessions." I was greatly struck by the entire fairness of the proceedings.

* * * * *

My trial took place at the Old Bailey. I pleaded guilty. Counsel for the Crown then made his statement. I was ignorant of the procedure in courts, and was surprised at his moderation. He was neither scathing nor rhetorical, but confined himself to a statement of facts. I suppose that as I had already pleaded guilty and my condemnation was assured, there was no need to pitch things in a high key. He even gave the devil his due. He said that for about eight years I had been of exemplary conduct and was a most promising bank clerk, that I had early been placed in positions of trust important beyond my years, that my advice had been sought by my employers on account of the special aptitude I had shown in the matter of investments, and that I had finally been advanced to one of the highest positions of trust the bank had to offer. That about four years ago I had got into wild and dissipated ways beyond the common, but had shown extraordinary self-command as regards my business, and had continued to give every satisfaction and to be implicitly trusted. Counsel considered it his duty to draw his lordship's particular attention to those parts of the police court depositions which showed that the prisoner, though on trial for the embezzlement

of one amount of £1,200, had continually, and for a period of nearly three years, made use of the bank's money for his own purposes, although he had always been able to replace the amounts before discovery. With all deference counsel supposed that his lordship would wish to be in possession very fully of all such facts as would enable him to arrive at the sentence to be inflicted in a case in which birth, good breeding, education, a high reputation for honour, had in a special manner contributed to deceive, and consequently to aggravate, the serious breach of trust which had been committed.

The judge then turned to me and said: "You have heard what counsel says. Have you anything you wish to say?"

"No, my lord, nothing whatever!"

"You have heard him say that in addition to the amount with which you are charged, you have been guilty of a number of previous acts of embezzlement, which, however, you were able to make good before they were detected? Is that true?"

"Yes, my lord. Perfectly true."

"Do you wish to call any witnesses?"

"None, my lord!"

"Have you anything you wish to say to me before I pass sentence?"

"Nothing, my lord!"

A pause. A whispered consultation with the clerk of the court. I had been struck by the judge's fairness of manner, his evident desire that I should use such privileges as I was entitled to. Then his manner changed. He grew stern, impressive.

"Christopher Austin Gideon Mavourez!" he began. (Oh, then I quailed for the first time, to hear our name pronounced in a public court with the reproach that I had brought upon it. I put my hands before my face, and seemed to hear a ghastly howl in my ears: Mavourez love doth end in shame.) The judge paused for a moment and then continued: "You have pleaded guilty to a charge of embezzling the sum of £1,200. The court now hears that this is only the last of a series of acts of embezzlement on your part extending over a considerable period of time, and involving in the aggregate a very substantial sum of money. All these embezzlements, save the last, you were able to make good, but I cannot admit this as a factor in your favour, because it shows that having embarked upon a career of fraud you persisted in it, regardless of the many warnings you must have received, and heedless of the opportunities that arose, on each occasion, to

abandon that career. I cannot find in your case any circumstance to suggest that you acted at any time, even on the first occasion that you helped yourself to money that was not your own, under any sudden pressure of temptation or distress, or that you took the money for any object worthier than your own selfish and wicked pleasures. Nor can I allow the fact that there is nothing against your previous character, to operate in your favour. It is men of good character who are placed in positions of trust because of their good character; it was your good character in great measure that enabled you to commit the offences of which you are now charged. You were in a position of great trust and responsibility, and in receipt of a salary that should have amply rewarded that responsibility, and was amply adequate for all your reasonable needs. The sentence that I pass upon you must needs be severe. The crime of embezzlement is on the increase: too many cases have of late been before the courts. The sentences given have had no deterrent effect, and lately in several big cases of similar frauds the delinquents have escaped justice by getting beyond extradition facilities. Public confidence is being shaken. An example is called for. You have abused your trust, not once but many

times; you have used to the full the abilities and natural advantages you had to lull to sleep any suspicions your employers might have had, and though it is true that you have made no attempt at any time to deny the charges and have pleaded guilty, I should be failing in my duty to the public—whose confidence in all matters where trusteeship of any kind is involved must be sustained—if I passed a lesser sentence on you than the one I am about to pass, namely that you be kept in penal servitude for a period of five years."

There was a little hum in court, it seemed to me of surprise. I noticed legal gentlemen nodding to each other, and whispering, and differing in opinion. I gathered that the sentence was thought somewhat severe. But the prisoner at all events had no fault to find with it. The whole of the remainder of my life must be one of expiation and penance. With my utter want of vocation for a religious order, how was I ever to find such a life? Here at all events four or five years of it had been beneficently arranged for me.

* * * * *

On the night of my condemnation I received a grace that strengthened me marvellously for

prison life and the long years of penance which were to follow. I was tossing on my truckle bed, trying to sleep. The cell was in inky darkness. I opened my eyes after having vainly tried for hours, so it seemed, to snatch at sleep. Suddenly I noticed in the corner of the cell a faint shimmer of light, and soon a few tongues of flame rose up out of it and vanished. I sat up in bed, and then fell back on my elbow. That I remember distinctly. Little by little, out of the shimmering light emerged an azure ground fretted with pearl-like cloud, and a ruby frame shaped as a heart formed itself round the heavenly mass. And then I saw, but whether waking or sleeping I cannot tell: God knoweth: I saw a lovely golden-haired Child in a rose-coloured tunic standing on silver clouds in the midst of the heart. He held a harp which shone like topaz and struck a few chords, not rich, simple rather, but very sweet, and as he struck his harp he sang in a soft, rhythmic monotone: "Child of St. Bona, dear Christopher, I'm within thee. I'm within thee in all the glory of my Majesty. I'm within thee. Together let us praise the One and undivided Trinity. I'm within thee. I'm within." And then he broke into heavenly song, and I sang with him. He

gave out the divine versicles, and for all responsory I answered with the angelic Alleluia!

Dominus Deus tuus in medio tui, fortis:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Ipse salvabit:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Gaudebit super te in laetitia:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Silebit in delectione sua:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Exaltabit super te in laude:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Dominus Deus tuus in medio tui, fortis:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Ipse salvabit:
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

He ceased to sing, and took up once more the sweet, consoling monotone *I'm within thee*, striking a few chords on his harp the while, and then the heavenly vision faded away little by little as it had come, until only a faint shimmer of light marked the spot where it had been. All this I heard and saw, but whether waking or sleeping I know not: God knoweth: but this I do know, that restful peace was in my heart at the dawn of the next day, and that the Sun of Righteousness has never wholly left me since.

* * * * *

Of my prison life I need say next to nothing. My first six months—the hardest of all—were done in an ordinary prison. After that I was moved to a convict prison for the rest of my term. Religion returned to me completely in prison, and in that I was happy. The Chaplain's visits were a bright spot, and I was able to go to confession and communion frequently. My conduct in prison was of course decent. I believe that it was even called "exemplary." I took to the prison work simply because it was work. Soon I was given small places of trust, and in three years' time I was made "librarian," a curious appointment it seemed to one who had never read or handled books. But it was work, and no work ever came amiss to me. Besides it actually had the effect of making me read a little. I took up St. Augustine's *Confessions* because he was my patron saint, and read and was fascinated. There was an old, battered French version of the *Soliloquies, Meditations and Manual* attributed to him, robust piety which appealed strongly to me. Both the *Confessions* and this book bred contrition, and helped me to aspire to complete conversion and purification. You will hardly believe that I had never read the *Imitation*. But that is so. My idea of dutiful spiritual reading was Rodriguez,

and when I had laboured through him I began him all over again. The *Imitation* showed me how much I had lost by not reading. But having found this book of books, it stopped me reading anything else. I read it in my six languages continually, turn and turn about, Latin, English, French, Italian, German, and Netherlandish. The Chaplain helped me to get these books, and out of my earnings in prison I had saved enough to buy them.

Near the end of my fourth year the Governor informed me that one year of my sentence had been remitted for good conduct, and that I could prepare to leave the prison in a month's time. I thanked him, but was indifferent to the news. What was to become of me? My life was what the world called completely blasted. All careers were closed to one who had been condemned for a gross breach of trust. I could hardly hope to earn the barest daily bread anywhere if it were known who I was. I had not a penny in the world and must live. But even if a good thing were to offer in a distant country where no one knew me, I could not take it. I had bound myself to what I deserved, a penitential life for the rest of my days. How to find this—there was the rub. A severe religious order? Nothing could be

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more convenient, if God placed me there. But this was not to be looked for, as I had too manifestly no vocation for the religious life. But *Deus providebit*, and I could not doubt that if a penitential life were to present itself to me on my release, it would represent God's designs and I should embrace it. I was conscious of a change in me after nearly four years of prison life. I had a greater *sensible* love of God. Up to the age of twenty-four life had been smooth, and my love for God I consider was little more than dutiful: I strove to repay Him for all His goodness by loyalty and a decent, straight life—that was all. That I should have been taken out of the depths to which I had sunk during the terrors of my eclipse, that I should have been placed again in His Order, enrolled again in His service at the same wages as those who had never failed Him,—all this touched me to the quick and roused sensible love and gratitude.

The day of my release came. I had been allowed to grow my hair and beard. The beard, which I had never seen before, was grotesque (I really ought not to be wearing it now, it is pure laziness), but I saw at once that it was a wonderfully complete disguise. I was given a rough, ill-fitting suit made in

the prison tailoring department, a grey flannel shirt, a celluloid collar and a pair of heavy boots. I had saved about £6 out of money earned by prison labour. Thus equipped I proposed to seek out a cheap lodging-house, and trust that the Will of God would be revealed to me before my slender store of money had dwindled away.

The governor sent for me. There was a gentleman with him in his room with such an eager, warm, kind look in his clear eyes. Oh friend, dear friend, that you should have thought even of this, that you should have been watching and waiting and arranging for this day. Decidedly my emotions were no longer under control. "Come," said the Governor, kindly, "you shall have a room to yourselves where you can talk. But first let me say" (turning to me) "that I think I can at least promise that you will not be required to report personally to the police during the period that you are under supervision. It will be sufficient if you report by letter. This, I hope, will make it easier for you to find work and return to normal life." I thanked him warmly. He led us to a room adjoining his own. Here he whispered something to Casauban, who answered audibly, "when I call."

"Paul," I said, "I know you have come here to take me to your house——"

"No, Chris," he replied, "I haven't, because I knew you wouldn't come. I knew that you would be content with nothing less than work and independence. Every profession, every chance of recovery in the world in a position suited to your abilities is gone, is it not? Any work that could be found for you and keep you unknown would be so mean as to be simply penitential——"

"Yes, yes!" I cried, eagerly.

He smiled. "I believe you want penitential work——"

"Yes, but not only I," I interrupted; "I believe God wants it for me."

"You know that!" he replied. "And so do I!"

"Then find it for me, find it for me!" I cried excitedly.

"I believe I have," he answered. "Let me see, this is Wednesday. You can start on next Monday if you like the idea. One of the directors of the old Vulcan Insurance Company is an old friend of my father's. The company wants six supernumerary clerks. One berth has been reserved for any nominee of mine. You will get thirty shillings a week. The work

is nominally only temporary, but they might keep you on a year or two according to their needs. Do you accept?"

"It is just what I need—bare subsistence united to what would to me be severe penance. But how can I take anything in the city of London, where I should be sure to be recognised?"

He smiled. "Come over to the glass here and look at yourself."

He was right. With that beard, in such clothes, even my former fellow-clerks could hardly recognise again the once "best dressed man in the city."

"Yes, I accept. No greater penance can I imagine than to be at work again on the scene of my former successes as a despised super, without any secure tenure, without anything to vary the endless monotony of the day's job of mechanical copying, carefully having to hide that I have business knowledge and ability, carefully having to avoid making the slightest friendly advance to those around me, or even to receive such advances. Yes, this is indeed a penitential life. Oh, wonderful that He should have at once provided for me a situation which, when I thought it over in

prison, seemed quite hopeless to find. I must take a false name, I fear. You don't mind?"

"Of course not. Now I fear you will have to take a loan of £50 from me for outfit. Listen a moment. You had better have your own little house than be in lodgings. It will be more private and secret. In the E. direction I know of a row where you can get a tiny house for £10 a year. That will leave you the handsome sum of £68 a year to live on. . . . And now something important. I met a lady here this morning who is waiting to see you—Miss Cressida Vaughan."

"I don't want to see her!" I interrupted, greatly agitated. "I cannot possibly see her! Can't we be going?"

"You must see her, Chris. You must be just. I believe I have surprised a secret of yours, a secret most wonderfully kept. She is waiting. I begged to be allowed to see you first. She is with the Governor's wife. I know it is your duty to see her!"

He opened the door into the Governor's room and called. Cressida came forward and stood in the doorway, her face gathered into the sweetest expression of love and anxiety. It was sixteen years—sixteen years!—since I had last seen her in St. Helen's Place, a lovely girl

of seventeen, and here she was in the full splendour of womanly beauty. I realised how deeply I had been shaken by the life of the last eight years. My emotions were no longer under the same control. If she had come to speak of love, to plead for union, the ordeal I had to undergo would be terrible.

"I will leave you to talk," said Casauban, going into the Governor's room.

Cressida came straight over to me, placed her hands lightly on my shoulders, and hid her face on the back of one of her hands. "Dear Chris," she said, "for nearly a year I have been in Italy. I went to Pisa, so that I might see the Villa Cavalca where your mother was born. What you told me of her that May evening in old Capulet's orchard, the miniature you showed me of her, enchanted me. I love her very name, Bona; I think of her constantly; I pray to her—especially for you and me. I found the *padrone*—your cousin Domenico Cavalca whom you have never seen—more than willing to sell. I bought the villa at once. The name of Cavalca has disappeared from the brick pillars of the gateway: the house is now called the Villa Bona. It was like consecrating a chapel and hermitage to a new saint—the Beata Bona. Scattered round the villa, with a cypress

tree here and there to mark their boundaries, are the seven *poderi* that go with it, giving work to ten families of simple, loveable, devoted souls. They are calling to you to guide them with your judgment and knowledge, to share their labours, their troubles and their joys. Here is good and useful work, here indeed is a mission, all ready to your hand. The little kingdom has acclaimed its ruler: all is ready for the entry of its lord!"

She felt that I would have started away in protest, and looked up beseechingly, the blue eyes moist, as if to say: wait,—only a moment more. She hid her face again on her hand. "I know, I know exactly what you would say," she went on. "Oh, how well I know you! I know exactly what you meant in your letter when you said that love profaned cannot be resumed. Yes, the great love as you truly called it, is gone for us beyond recall. It lives for ever in my heart, in yours. It is forbidden to us to realise it, but, Chris, why should we not take the vow of the Soldier-Saint Henry and his Empress Cunegonda: we will found our lives on theirs, and always be together. I *must* be there to care for you, I *must* be there to bind up your wounds, and you *must* be by me to tell me of God's Will

and so have you. But forgiveness is not enough. There are no regenerating waters that can wash away my outrage upon a love which is next to God's love in greatness [1]—the pure love of man and woman. Our love was a manifestation of Paradise, and any maimed substitute or pretence could only be a torment of hell. You see this already, and bless me for my free speech. A great and complete sacrifice is required of both of us: henceforth we shall be joined in one life of sacrifice. A merciful God has redeemed me from a horrible life, and set me once more, if sadly lamed, upon the narrow way. There I may fall often—but on, please God, not from, the way. Oh, Cressida, I may be of good cheer, the narrow way, which I walked too proudly and confidently until at last I fell from it, is dotted with Heaven's first-aid stations, and the winged brothers of the Celestial Misericordia are ever on the watch with their swift hand-ambulances. Good-bye, dear Cressida! Our sacrifice must be complete; no letters even; a separation once for all and utterly, a perfect holocaust. For you I have no fear. See, He awaits you even here, His arms full of graces, His heart full of

[1] Geen liefde komt Gods liefde nader;
Noch is zoo groot.—*Vondel.*

love. Clasp His right hand; suffer yourself to be led according to His Will: His glory, I know, will encompass you.[2] I shall follow from afar upon the same road. Cressida, I believe that you will go deep in spiritual prayer and the contemplative life about which I know so little. Speak to Casauban about it. He is a wonderful guide. And then, dear Cressida, when you pray, *memento mei.* With you and Paul Casauban to pray for me, I may never so much as need first-aid upon the narrow way."

I had ended, and now, O wonder! as she stood ready to depart, there appeared around her head, rising slowly,—not the Mavourez flame, but majestical, a white, diaphanous light fretted with a celestial fire of golden tongues,—a veritable glory. And for the merits of St. Gideon and my ancestors it was given even to me to see the faint golden outline of a Regal Figure, diaphanous as her aureole, leading her away as if to heavenly nuptials through the triumph of martyrdom. At the sight thus revealed to my unworthy eyes, the refrain of an old Netherlandish ballad rose up within me, melodious as a bridal chant:

[2] Tenuisti manum dexteram meam: et in voluntate tua deduxisti me: et cum gloria suscepisti me.—Psalm lxxii.

Strew lily leaves and the red rose,
Agnes to her wedding goes.[3]

At the door she stopped, her hand still in His, and spoke for the last time: "Chris, dear heart, you placed my hand in His, here before the altar of our love and sorrows: be sure that I shall never loose it again."

And with that she passed through the door and out of my life but deep, deep down into my soul, and by the light and glory of her last sacrifice I have been helped to grope my way along the strait road to the gate where, in a sure and certain hope, I now await the joyful summons from the city within!

[3] *Sint Agnes' Bruiloft,* by Johannes Stalpert van der Wiele, priest (1579-1630).

Strooit roô roos' en lelie-blaan,
Agnes zal te Bruiloft gaan.

CHAPTER VII

EXPIATION

All was arranged for me to begin work in the Vulcan Insurance Company on the following Monday. I took the little house in the East, about two miles from the city, at £10 a year. It was at the corner of an interminable noisy street called Meadows Lane. There were four rooms and a kitchen. Three windows and a door in front graced each of the houses in long succession. At the back was a tiny yard, in the front a small muddy patch of ground with a withered bush in the centre. There was nothing for it but to accept a loan of £50 from Casauban. I furnished a bed- and a sitting-room with absolute necessities, and bought a few kitchen utensils. I also bought two ready-made baggy suits and an overcoat, and some soft white shirts and collars. £5 remained over to me after my purchases. I put this in the savings bank as the nucleus of the savings with which I was going to repay Casauban's loan at a very remote date.

I had been told that the office hours were 9.30 to 4.30, with a quarter of an hour's grace in the morning. An attendance book had to be signed by every clerk as he entered. This was taken away at 9.45 sharp, and the names of the clerks who arrived late and had not signed, were written in red ink below the others. I was the first to arrive, and signed at the head of the list in my best fancy hand, JAMES WILLIAMS, the name under which I now passed. A messenger took me downstairs to the basement and into a large lavatory with a long row of basins. Round three sides of the room ran numbered lockers, and a locker was assigned to me in which I put my hat and coat. I was asked, would I lunch on the premises or go out? If I went out, half an hour for lunch would be given me. On the premises I could have a plate of meat or fish, vegetables, bread, cheese, and a glass of beer for a shilling. This was grand, and solved the food problem for me completely. I readily elected to lunch indoors.

I was then taken upstairs to a remote part of the building called the Foreign Fire Department. A clerk produced a large flat register and a big bundle of sheets well covered with writing. These were copies of policies from

the branches and agencies in different parts of the world. From them I had to transfer to the columns of the register the number of the policy, the name of the insured, the nature of the risk, the address, the sum insured, the amount of the premium, the period of risk and the date of expiry. That was all. This, and this alone, was to be my work for whatsoever time I might be kept by the company. I realised at once how bitter beyond all thought, how seemingly heavy beyond all bearing, was the penitential life upon which I had now entered. Think of my previous position in the city which, if the partnership had failed me, would easily have led to the management and control of any of the biggest banks going. Here I was that most wretched species of city clerk, the poor super on a weekly wage, who could be turned adrift at a moment's notice; here the life was simply stagnation, which in the course of years might very well bring on softening of the brain. I heard the roar of traffic outside which had so stimulated me in the past, and my pulses tingled at the remembrance of the active life, now dead and gone for ever. But such thoughts were absurd. I had found, almost miraculously, exactly the life I had asked for and wanted, and my soul

was really full of gratitude. For I was not merely on the narrow way, but had taken up my cross and was following Him, if from afar.

My arrival created a good deal of curiosity, and there was tittering among the younger clerks. I think my beard was the subject of considerable merriment; perhaps, too, my ill-fitting "slops." Foreign business was fairly new to the company, and had not yet fully developed. The department did not seem particularly busy, and there was plenty of laughing, talking and joking. A good deal of chaff flew about, some of it directed at me. I bent low over my work and tried to seem absorbed in the weary monotony. When the foreign manager and the head of our room had been called downstairs for consultations, bits of india-rubber and elastic bands shot as catapults, began to hurtle through the air. A bit of india-rubber hit me full in the eye, causing a running stream. A little clerk of seventeen came hurrying up with a real look of concern in his face. "Awfully sorry, old chap," he said; "I meant it for that beast Haynes." Whereupon the beast Haynes tried to tip him on the head with a ruler across me, and hit my knuckles instead. There was gen-

eral delighted laughter. Then the two, each with a ruler, fought a duel behind, across, and around me, and the beast Haynes slipping, caught hold of my coat and dragged me off my stool to the ground. At that moment the swing-door opened and in dashed the little manager briskly with a large bundle of papers under his arm. There was an immediate leaping on to stools; pencils dashed up and down columns in imaginary additions, registers were fussily swished over and over for entries that were not wanted, and there was a general atmosphere of prodigious absorption in work. I alone stood idle, dolefully brushing my clothes. The manager looked at me sternly, but passed on. I was only a super, and could be dismissed that night. After being caught red-handed in a boisterous romp on my first day, I fully expected dismissal in the evening.

The day passed intensely wearily. My mind seemed to give under the blank inanity of the work. At a quarter to five I got to the bottom of a page and stopped. I started to find the manager looking over my shoulder, and I prepared for dismissal. "Very good, Mr. Williams, very neat and clear. And you've done a very good allowance, too." Certainly my

pages looked shipshape enough. I was not writing my natural hand, but an artificial one, clear and ornamental, but very laborious to do.

I went down to the lavatory to get my hat and coat. The beast Haynes and another youth, side by side, were having a vigorous sluice in two of the basins.

"What think of noo super?" one was saying between his splashes.

"Bit barmy in the crumpet, eh?"

"Seems to me more criminal lunatic type."

"P'raps so. Quiet sort of beast, though."

"I dessay. But p'raps we'll knock sparks out of him yet. What?"

"Rummy beard, eh?"

"Doosid rummy!"

I slipped away without being noticed. This summary of my characteristics was really rather valuable information. I saw that I must be very careful not to give these high-spirited young gentlemen any openings for skylarking with me. If I could play the imbecile a bit, it would help in my disguise, perhaps withdraw attention from me,—but perhaps also attract it. I must be careful not to overdo.

Arrived at home, I sat down and began to calculate ways and means.

	£	s.	d.
First there was my rent per annum.....	10	0	0
My mid-day meal at the office for 307 days at 1s. with annual gratuity, say.....	16	0	0
My mid-day meal at home on Sundays and holidays for 58 days at 1s.	2	18	0
My breakfast and supper for 365 days at say 1s. 6d. a day.....	27	7	6
Daily paper at a penny.....	1	5	11
Catholic weekly at a penny.....	0	4	4
Church plate, every Sunday 6d. (if possible)..	1	6	0
Easter offering.....	0	5	0
Finest Navy Cut for a year (6d. a week).....	1	6	0
	£60	12	9

My annual income amounted to £78. Thus I had £17 7s. 3d. over for clothes, unlooked-for expenses, and savings. I had not realised that I should have so handsome an overplus. I walked to and from the city every day and in all weathers, so there was no expense for locomotion. Besides, in this way I was guaranteed punctuality, even on foggy days. Allowing a comfortable margin—and, as a matter of fact, I did improve rations a bit—I calculated on saving £10 a year. But natural extravagance of temperament stood in the way, and I rarely saved more than five. I was my own cook, char and gardener, for I worked hard at the mud-patch in front, and made it bright

with borders and variegated flowers. I used the scrubbing brush and the broom vigorously, and really made the little shanty tidy and inviting. I cut myself off entirely from all recreation, and went neither to theatre nor picture shows when they came in. But unawares I had managed to encourage the melodious, stirring, intoxicating piano-organs. Several of them got to know that I was good for a threepenny piece, and played exactly opposite my house. And then the joyful, graceful children of the East would dance there, and shout to me in my patch: "Chuck us a copper, governor!" But what they liked still better than coppers were the sooty roses, wallflowers and sweet-williams from my patch. They would put the flowers in their hair, and dance in rings round the organ with noisy joy, as if they had been the daughters of plutocrats and not the children of sweated labour. It was a blessed sight—and oh, how bitter the thought that I had not always run straight, and might now be doing good in the world. Somehow when Mr. Punch came down Meadows Lane with drum and cymbals, he always stopped opposite No. 113, and I saw him and heard him from my patch. I fear that dissipation of this kind

often reached a shilling a week or £2 12s. "per annum," as we used to say in business.

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The second day at the office passed like the first, and many another, so far as the work was concerned. Talking and joking among the clerks was pretty constant. Politics, however, divided the department and caused bitterness and strong language. Really they were as happy, merry, good-natured a set of fellows as one could expect to find anywhere, and the blessed spirit of humour kept constant holiday with them. Certainly no opportunity of sky-larking was ever lost. An opportunity occurred on the afternoon of the second day. "Let's have a game of William Sneak!" proposed Soulsby, chucking up an apple and catching it. "Who'll be Little Walter?" asked Haynes. "Mr. Williams, like to be Little Walter?" I smiled vacantly. "Oh, show him first," said Rickards; "that's only fair!" Finally a delightful little chap with snub nose and twinkling eyes offered to be Little Walter. It was Little Walter's business to stand in a corner with the apple on his head, holding up a ledger to protect his face, while the others took it in turn to have cockshies at the apple with bits of india-rubber.

I began to understand why the game was called William *Sneak*. It was indescribably comic, especially when little Walter tried pulling faces over the top of the ledger and received a big bit of india-rubber on the tip of his snub nose. On these occasions there was always a clerk posted near the counter to act as watchman, called for the nonce "Sister Anne." He could see the manager before he came in at the swing doors. "*Cave*! you blokes. *Cave*!" hissed Sister Anne. And then there was the same agile vaulting on to stools: away went the pens, up and down went the pencils, and over and over swished the leaves of ledgers and registers. Never was seen such a display of zealous clerical labour. But Little Walter was holding his pocket handkerchief before a streaming nose.

After six months of this life, I had established a reputation of being quiet, industrious, a decent sort, but a bit deficient and very solemn. I was left in comparative peace: chaff about me died down, and I was not expected to take part in romps. But alas! having with much effort attained to so desirable a reputation, I lost it in a single moment of thoughtlessness, and had to begin all over again to build it up. The department was great on puns:

but they were all very feeble puns, and that was why the department enjoyed them so. The talk had turned to tennis. Somebody remarked that young Rickards was quite a *dook* at the game. "Better *mark 'is* play in future," said Soulsby. (A general groan). "Rather *Early* in the day, Mr. Soulsby, to make such *Baron* jests," said Haynes. Much groaning, and a good deal of laughter. Then the very imp of mischief got into my blood. I looked up from my weary toil straight at Haynes and said, "*Vi count* 'em?" There was a yell, followed by groans, guffaws, and laughter, and a demonstrative crowd was round me, slapping me on the back. "I believe he's a bold bad man in disguise," said Haynes. "And I believe he's Viscount in disguise," said Little Walter. And the nickname unfortunately stuck, and I was always referred to as the Viscount, nor did I get rid of it till the department grew to great and flourishing proportions and all the fun and merriment died out of it.

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At the end of Meadows Lane there was a small, corrugated-iron Catholic Church dedicated to the Holy Name and the English Martyrs. The priest was a cherubic boy of

twenty-five, whom it was almost ludicrous to call "Father," hard-working, devoted, more sanguine than any mortal I ever met in my life. In the porch of the chapel were beautiful, framed, architectural designs of the large, handsome brick church that was going to rise when the sum of £4,500 had been fully subscribed. There was also a list of subscribers showing that subscriptions to date amounted to £121 4s. 7d. Inside, the little church was wonderfully spick and span, the greatest attention being given to cleanliness. The little priest often scrubbed the floors himself, and sometimes I lent a hand with the scrubbing brush. There were coloured plaster statues of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady before the altar rails, one on each side, there were stations of the Cross, and a big gold IHS on a blue ground over the altar—that was about as far as we went in ornaments. I got to love this little church more than any I had ever known. From the beginning I went, for the first time in my life, to daily Mass. Mass was at eight o'clock, and I had plenty of time to get my scanty breakfast, walk my two miles, and sign the book before nine forty-five. Before so very long I became the regular server at the week-day Mass. Our average congregation was four.

There were days when not a single person appeared. There had often been days, before my arrival, when the priest had had to be content with a woman answering the responses from the body of the church. There could certainly not have been more uncompromisingly bad Catholic ground in the whole of London than Meadows Lane. Well for Father Philip Jones that he remained unweariedly hopeful. He would plunge at times and insert whole-page stirring advertisement appeals, and get a response that just about paid the cost of the advertisement. He was an excellent preacher, and on the rare occasions that he could get a friendly pulpit for an appeal, he would come back with a few pounds some shillings and some pence. Otherwise not a soul showed the slightest interest in the Meadows Lane project. But the reverend boy was never daunted, and averred that before many years were out Meadows Lane would boast of the finest Catholic Church in the East End.

I went to confession to him every week, and to communion every Sunday. In six months he suggested my going to communion on Saturdays as well. This he gradually increased until, within a year, he had launched me into daily communion, a wonderful change in my life, for

which may Heaven bless him! We never became in the least intimate, and could hardly be called friends. I declined his frugal hospitality, and, of course, could not ask him to anything myself. He dropped in on me in the evenings sometimes for a chat and a pipe, and I on him. I liked him because he never asked any questions about me. So simple was he, that I don't think I surprised him in any way. He knew in the Confessional that I had been a big sinner, and had been heavily punished by Almighty God. But otherwise I was very reticent, and except that I was a clerk in the Vulcan on a poor salary, he knew nothing whatsoever about me.

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Now I really need not trouble you with any detailed account of the heavy monotony of my city life. It was quite contrary to precedent and practice in the case of a super, but I had become an institution, and was allowed to stay on. Seven and twenty years did I work there as a super on thirty shillings a week. I gained my great end, a life of unmolested penance: God hid me under His wings where the shadow was darkest, that no man might discover me. In the whole of that time my work never changed,

my wages were never raised. During the whole of that time I was never absent with a day's illness, I was never once late in signing the book, I never once received a reprimand. At first I used to dread meeting in the streets, acquaintances of the old days who might recognise me. But I soon changed beyond recognition. Then our offices were situated at the east end of Fenchurch Street; my way home led up Aldgate and the Whitechapel Road, so I never had occasion to pass through those parts of the city which I principally frequented in banking days. I never, alas! even went to see St. Helen's Place, where I had passed the most blissful, unalloyed two hours of happiness ever given me.

Casauban I had lost sight of altogether. After about twenty-five years of my life as a super, I read a long, detailed review of the *Solitaries of the Sambuca* in my penny Catholic weekly. Something in the review gave me a haunting impression that it might relate to Casauban, so I plunged and actually bought the book, the first book I had bought in twenty-five years. I saw at once that the central character was the man who of all others I loved and reverenced. Although I didn't understand the life, I fully understood your motive

in leaving the Sambuca to write a book about it. But I was filled with a great longing to take your place as business man, and relieve him of all anxiety of that kind. That was at the beginning of 1915. There was nothing to prevent me leaving the office at a day's notice. I knew that Casauban would welcome me, and that there would be good practical work for me to do. But there was not the slightest evidence that it was God's Will that I should go out to a place in the sun, whereas there was every evidence that He had placed me where I was to work out a life of penance. I did not hesitate, but stayed where I was.

At the end of 1916 a fiat went forth that supers were to be abolished in the Vulcan. There were eleven of us. The general manager told me with real concern that no difference could be made in my case, and that I should have to cease work on the 31st of December. I was glad. Nothing else presented itself. I felt that the call to go to Casauban had come, and I prepared for the day of departure. When that day came, I certainly was a bit shaken by emotions. I could not say good-bye to the place or the people without a pang. But I dreaded the ordeal of the good-byes. I wrote on after closing time to finish off a batch of

policies, then laid down my pen for the last time, and nerved myself for the last adieux. It was with a start that I looked round the big room. Not a soul there. All had gone, oblivious of the fact that it was my last day. Instead of relief at the deliverance, I suddenly felt very humanly sore and sad. Even the "beast Haynes" had gone. He was one of the very few of the old staff left, and had been uniformly kind, and had even tried to get me out to Brixton to see "the wife and kids." Well, *pazienza!* as we say here in Italy. I must, however, go to the manager's room and say good-bye and thank: that was a duty. On the way I met one of the messengers, looking for me. "Manager wants to see you in the board-room at once!" he said. Odd, that he should want to see me in the room where he only saw directors. Perhaps one of the directors had found out who I was, and wanted to see me. Well, that wouldn't much matter now. I opened the board-room door. The place was full of noisy men, young and old, laughing and chaffing. Pandemonium seemed let loose. At sight of me there were shouts of "Here he is! here he is! Order! Order!" A dead silence fell upon the room. I saw the general manager standing at the end of the long board table, and then his voice

travelled to me, seemingly from miles and miles away, through the heavy mist which hung before my eyes.

"Mr. Williams," he was saying: "Your fellow-clerks have met here together under my auspices to bid you farewell and to wish you Godspeed in life. You have worked for the old Vulcan Company twenty-seven years, and by your steady industry, your devotion to duty, your uniform courtesy and the ready but unassuming way in which you have adapted yourself to circumstances and people, you have earned the general esteem and goodwill of all —managers, clerks, messengers, and, I may say, the board of directors itself. In twenty-seven years you have never been absent a day from illness, in twenty-seven years you have never once failed to sign the attendance book. That is a wonderful record, and there is not a man present—including myself—who can in any way approach it. (Cheers).

"Mr. Williams, we are all sorry to lose you. I regret that the terms of your service do not admit of any pension, but the directors have much pleasure in requesting you to accept this cheque for £100 as a mark of their appreciation of your services. That, perhaps, will suffice for present needs, but if you should re-

quire other temporary work in the city, let me know. Though it cannot be, I regret to say, in the Vulcan owing to new regulations, you may always count upon my warm recommendation for anything that may be going. (Cheers).

"And now Mr. Williams, it gives me even greater pleasure to hand you this carriage clock. It has been subscribed for by your fellow clerks from the oldest in the department, down to the latest comer, and it is a token of regard, respect and admiration for the man who, with rare modesty, has set them all an example of steadiness, good conduct, and devotion to duty. It bears the inscription: 'James Williams. In memory of 1889-1916. From friends and well-wishers in the Vulcan Insurance Office.' The world often seems black, life inexplicable, and mankind hard and indifferent, but let to-day's little ceremony convince you, Mr. Williams, that the world is not so black as it looks, and that wherever in any body of men collected together, there appears a man who is upright in character, considerate in demeanour, unswervingly devoted to the ideal of duty, there, deep down in the hearts of the others, that man is respected, appreciated and beloved!" (Loud cheers).

Now Heaven help me, help! What sort of

a boor was I that but a moment before believed that these men had parted from me without a word or a handshake. O world so full of mystery, where yet the heart of the average man is so often a pearl of great price! *Mirabilia opera tua, Domine!* But now Heaven help! for the flood-gates are about to burst. I shall certainly break down. My throat is all parched. I cannot, I cannot bear up another moment. I must really go.

"Three cheers for Jimmy Williams! hip! hip!——" cried the young shrill voice of a junior. And three cheers were given, and three cheers more, and good-natured laughter mingled with the shouts.

"For he's a jolly good fellow!" intoned the same young voice, evidently much pleased with his first success, and the old song was sung and lustily re-sung. The cheers, the song, the laughter and jokes, saved me for the moment. I was able to go from one to the other, shaking hands with broken words of thanks. The manager was quite moved: "Good-bye, Williams; God bless you!" he said, and "Good-bye, old chap, awfully sorry you're going!" said the youngest member of the staff.

"Shoulder him! Shoulder him!" shouted the same born leader of men—may he live to

be general manager!—There was a loud shout of delight, and I was hoisted shoulder high and carried in triumph down to the basement to the words of an old song slightly adapted for the occasion. "When Jimmy comes marching home!"

I was deeply moved and shaken. The floodgates had almost reached bursting point. When I got out into Fenchurch Street, I felt that I must hurry, hurry home, at full speed if I wished to avoid a breakdown, and I began to run. I was carrying the clock by the leather strap of its case. A gust of wind took my hat off. Never mind—let it go. I must hurry, hurry home. I must not faint here in the street, I must not break down, here in Aldgate, into the uncontrollable fit of sobbing and weeping that was whirling round me and coming, coming, oh, so fast! I got off the pavement and ran in the street, among the traffic, along Whitechapel High Street, along Whitechapel Road. I saw an amateur detective call a policeman's attention to me. Heavens! Of course, hatless and scared, I must look like a thief. I quickened my pace in panic and ran on, on, now down Cambridge Street, then down one turning after another until I reached the turning leading to Meadows Lane.

At last, at last, I am at the corner. No, in my blind flight I have taken a wrong turning and have come out at the other end, opposite the little iron church of the Holy Name. Never mind. In five minutes I shall be home, home, and then O dear Lord, O kind and loving Master. Suddenly I felt a strong pair of arms go round me like an iron vice, and looking up, I saw a blue lamp with the words in white letters, POLICE STATION. I went inside unresistingly. The game was up. Happen what might, I could do no more. The clock was taken from me, and I was led into the chargeroom and put inside a kind of dock. All self-control left me. The flood-gates burst, and I fell forward on the ledge of the dock, sobbing and weeping, weeping and sobbing, as if there were no end to grief. But it was gratitude all the time, gratitude to God for His love and acknowledgment of so poor a servant, and gratitude to my fellowmen who, with so rare a loving-kindness, had met together to honour a pauper and an outcast. O great is the heart of my brother, *naturaliter Catholicus*, and rich are the treasures that are laid up therein! What wilt Thou do, O Lord, to honour those who have delighted to honour Thy servant, though but a *pauper-*

rimus servulus and *abjectus vermiculus?*[1] O that I might lead them from the Confusion where they are so content to the Order where they would be thrice blessed! There, where I am going, in that secluded and holy Solitude in Italy, I will ask prayers for them that I know are acceptable in Thy sight!

The waters subsided slowly: the Dove appeared, bringing peace. The Inspector was a patient man, but he now said sharply: "Name please?" Then began my examination: how had I come by the carriage clock? "Send for Father Jones over the way," I said; "he knows I am James Williams, he knows I am a clerk in the Vulcan, he knows I have been there twenty-seven years. He doesn't know that I was going to have a presentation to-day, but then neither did I myself."

Father Jones was sent for, the Inspector was easily satisfied, and I was able to go to my own home. In this dingy little lean-to against the Walls of Sion I had served God for twenty-seven years, and it had become dear to me. I was grieved to leave it, and I was grieved, too, to leave Father Phil, the only being in all this time who had been anything like an acquaintance. I must have been to Con-

[1] *Imit. Christi,* iii, 3, 6.

fession to him something like one thousand four hundred times. He was now fifty-two years of age, and by herculean efforts, in the midst of the stoniest indifference, the subscription list had now mounted up to £2,011 9s. 10d. One thing I could do: I had saved about £95. All I required was £50 to pay my long outstanding debt to Casauban, some new clothes and a second-class ticket to Italy. So I gave him my cheque for £100 for his church. His face of incredulity, amazement and delight, was as pleasant a sight as ever I saw in my life.

"All the same, you hardened old sceptic," he went on, "I don't believe you think I shall ever get the whole sum. But you've broken the spell: the list 'll get a move on now. Why, less than £2,500 'll do it! Besides, I've got someone up my sleeve."

"A noble lord, I suppose?"

"Well, not exactly. Say a noble lady. But closely related to a very noble lord. As you know, things leak through to Meadows Lane pretty slowly. I've only just had the *Histoire d'une âme* lent me, and I finished it last night. Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux is the name of my noble lady. She has said: 'je veux passer mon ciel à faire du bien sur la terre.' I've put the whole thing in her hands. What,

still sceptical! Well, you must admit she hasn't made a bad beginning!" And he held up my cheque in triumph.

Good-bye, dear Father Phil, you beaming, incorrigible, toiling optimist! People out in the land of Confusion with new ideas and big notions would call you commonplace and insignificant,—only the men, women and children of your sweated, slave-driven district could plumb a heart of gold such as yours. Well for Mother Church that she has many like you, given for life to the poor, whose only solace is a pipe, whose only recreation is a penny-reading got up to amuse other people: these unknown soldiers in the army of the King hold a bastion of the Divine City that legions of devils could never storm!

CHAPTER VIII

A PLACE IN THE SUN

And now you see how it happens that I have come out here to end my days in a place in the sun, as I call it. It was great happiness to see Casauban again. I found him changed, all shyness and awkwardness gone, and very far advanced in the spiritual life. But he recognised that some of his early efforts had been undertaken, so he averred, without sufficient reference to the Will of God. More especially was he convinced that he should never in these days have attempted a form of the solitary life which cut him off from daily communion. The form of his early life was good in itself, at fault only in its great distance from a church. He would much sooner have exposed himself to frequent interruptions and annoyances, than have cut himself off from that daily communion which the terrible pressure of the modern world has made almost essential to a recollected life.

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You will be interested to hear that Casauban

left his beloved Solitude early in 1915 and went to London, age about fifty-seven, to see if there was any "bit" that he could do for the country. To my mind this is the finest act of his noble life. With the exception of two very old men, the other Solitaries all followed his example. Casauban got a job as special constable and kept it for a year, when he was sent back to Italy by the service doctor owing to acute rheumatism which had developed. He then offered the Solitude and the villa to the Italian Government for any purpose it might choose, and it was turned into a convalescent hospital for Italian officers. Casauban contributed handsomely to the expenses, and Giovanni ran it for him; Dr. Castelfranchi, invalided home from the front, was medical officer in charge, and Don Costanzo was the chaplain. The experiment was a conspicuous success, and Casauban finds himself to his unlimited surprise a Commendatore of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus by *motu proprio* of the King. Best of all, Giovanni was made a Cavaliere of the Crown of Italy, and all the people round now call him Signor Cavaliere. Trust the Italian Government to make gracious acknowledgment of services rendered to it.

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I found Casauban now no longer averse from developing the property which lay outside the inclosure. It gave work to people, and provided sustenance for his guests, the Solitaries. About a mile and a half from here we have built a little village of sixteen white cottages. You must come out and see what we can do in the way of cultivation. I have Giovanni for my right-hand man, one of the straightest human beings I ever met. Between us, I think, we've got things pretty ship-shape. I have got proper books going by double entry, for there's quite a lot to do, and a big turnover. We shall start in printing books soon at the Sambuca press. I seem fated to be mixed up with books. Since you knew him, Giovanni has condescended to get married, a girl chosen with great care and some ceremony from the most respectable family of his native place. Now that we have a village community, he thought a wife would be useful in keeping the womenfolk up to the mark.

As for myself, perhaps Casauban was a little disappointed that I did not adopt the solitary life as it is led here. But he soon convinced himself that I was utterly unsuited to it, and never intended for it. I, of course, appreciate the opportunity of daily Mass and

daily communion under such perfect conditions, but I was more at home and ease in the little corrugated iron shelter in Meadows Lane, E. Fra Antonio is the most marvellous of living guides to the spiritual life—has he not accomplished the wonder of persuading me to have my life written?—but Father Phil's rapid exhortations—accompanied by an occasional shove—were enough to keep me straight and strong. I have called this place a place in the sun, and so it is; but it has its penitential side for me: to wit, the utter creepy stillness. Of course I had hours of complete silence in my late life, but passed in the invigorating, bracing atmosphere of bustle and noise. I miss the hurry and scurry, the rattle and roar, the shouts and cries of London town. And I miss the dancing children and the piano-organs: not so much as a *pifferaro* or a performing monkey ever comes near us here. But at all events I've plenty of good and useful work; itself a means of sanctification, as the Solitary is the first to admit.

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I hope you feel a shade of interest in my dear Father Phil. Just one thing about him in parenthesis. Soon after my arrival I told

Casauban of his twenty-seven years struggle to build a church to the Holy Name, and asked him for an offering. He promised to look into ways and means, and give what he could. The next day he said simply in his laconic fashion: "I don't know whether you know my system, but I don't consider that I have any right to invest savings, so I give them away. I haven't touched last year's savings yet, so I can easily spare this. I like nothing so much as completing a good work which has been begun." He put into my hands a cheque for £2,500. Father Phil's noble lady had stood him in good stead and the little optimist had triumphed. I should like to have seen the result of £2,500 on his cherubic countenance. See, here is a photograph of the grand new church which was consecrated last month. I speak of it as "the cathedral" when I write, and of him as the Bishop of the East End. But, as I've told him, I do think it as well that the Congregation of Rites should keep an eye on him, and prevent him breaking out into premature altars to his "noble lady." And I should like to have heard the panegyric of her which he preached in his own new church for a collection for the promotion of her cause!

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You have undertaken the unpleasant task of writing my life, so I suppose you will have to say something of its lessons. Our good Padre particularly wishes this. Do not fail to bring out strongly the immense advantages I had. Unless these are fully understood, the enormity of my sin, the magnitude of my fall, cannot be properly realised. I had been so well schooled, so beneficently enlightened, that nothing could excuse my sudden blindness. I remember a French priest quoting in a sermon some words of Joseph de Maistre which remain with me to this day. "L'homme," he said, "pour se conduire, n'a pas besoin de problèmes, mais de croyances. Son berceau doit être environné de dogmes; et lorsque sa raison se réveille il faut qu'il trouve toutes ses opinions faites, du moins sur tout ce qui a rapport à sa conduite." [1] This expresses exactly my case, and explains my success and happiness until I was overtaken by criminal madness. I heard nothing of problems, but much of positive beliefs. My cradle, my nursery, my school, my home life,—all were "environné de dogmes." From the first use of reason I found all my opinions as to right and

[1] These words occur at the beginning of Chapter X of the *Etude sur la Souveraineté*.

wrong ready made. They corresponded to the conscience within me, to the very needs of my being. I could not then, I cannot now, imagine a possible existence on this terrestrial globe under any other conditions. A solution of the problems which are distracting and weakening the modern world, would not bring with it a higher or more chivalrous code of virtue than that of the Catholic Church: very much the contrary. If I begin to worry about problems instead of acting on revelation, my will weakens, my action becomes halting, my intellect clouded, the practice of Christian virtue peters out: I break up, and fall to pieces in the outside world of disorder. Problems encourage an easy life, for it is always possible for their votaries to say: I have not yet proved that it is rational voluntarily to incur such inconveniencies, or that it is moral cheerfully to submit to such rigorous discipline. From all this misery Almighty God most mercifully delivered me. But not even in the dark days of the eclipse did I ever justify wrong and believe it to be right. All this I owe to my advantages.

In writing my life you will, among other things, have to refer pretty often to the Will of God. I don't envy you. That august ex-

pression has come to be associated with the worst form of unctuous cant. It makes good fellows shudder and look the other way. All those horrible D.V. people haven't the slightest wish to do what God has ordained for them: their devout hope is merely that nothing will prevent them doing what they want. I will not enlarge, but one almost wishes that this sublime, momentous subject could be spoken of by some other term.

Perhaps one lesson comes out rather clearly from my life: that every man may learn what God has ordained his life to be—i.e. the Will of God—at least in its broad significance. People to-day—and Catholic folk among them—take up professions and change residences from town to town, from home to abroad, without the slightest regard to whether God has ordained that they are to adopt such and such a profession, or to live in such and such a town or country. It is absolutely essential that a man should know to what profession he has been ordained by God's ordinance: the town or country usually goes with the profession. The certain rule is to accept the profession that comes to us. Here a man will find his call. But as each case has to be considered on its merits, it is almost impossible to do more than

lay down a general rule. In my own case I made no choice of a profession: (my own hankering was after fighting), a clerkship came to me in a natural way owing to former family connections with the bank. It was not even sought by my father, but offered to him to his great surprise. Absolutely nothing else was on the horizon. I had the ability and the bent necessary. How could I or my father doubt that the choice, the ordinance, was God's. And this was the reason he gave me for submitting. A greater care than formerly is necessary in exercising choice, or rather acceptance: for the weakening hold of the Christian religion has done much to enfeeble in mankind the good sense which used to mark the Christian's regulation of practical life. But once placed in a profession by God's ordinance, the Christian keeps close to it. "The perfect Christian," says Rosmini, "makes no change for the mere purpose of present satisfaction. . . . He loves not change . . . he has no thought of change unless he knows it to be according to the Will of God. . . . This constancy, this unchangeableness of the Christian in the condition wherein he is placed, forms men who are thoroughly acquainted with their state, men who love it, and know how

to discharge all its duties . . . the first thing which the Will of God lays down for him is to fulfill with fidelity, exactness, and alacrity, all the duties of his state. . . ." [2] A man's profession, in fact, is the touchstone, as it were, of God's Will with regard to him even in other matters. Père Caussade says: "Mais, pour ne s'écarter ni à droite ni à gauche, il faut que l'âme ne suive aucune inspiration qu'elle croirait avoir reçue de Dieu, avant de s'être assurée que cette inspiration ne l'éloigne point des devoirs de son état. Ces devoirs sont la manifestation la plus certaine de l'ordre de Dieu, et rein ne leur doit être préféré. . . ."[3]

There is another thing in which the Will of God is also made very plain to a man—the choice of the woman with whom he is to consummate the Holy Sacrament of Marriage. But here, now-a-days, far more than in the choice of a profession, a man acts without reference to God, and follows his own choice. We know what that means, and we see it reflected in the misery and crime with which the wedded state of to-day is stained. And yet there is a certain and easy rule by which a man may know whether his bride has been

[2] *Maxims of Perfection,* pp. 32, 33, 43.
[3] *L'Abandon à la Providence,* ed. 1886, p. 16.

given to him from on High—the rule I went by—Love. Love comes to him in his teens, at its best it will come to him at first sight; its first strong rays are spiritual, the human element appears only in the second place. This is the great, the pure love of man for woman, but how may that love be known among nations where the sacrament is unknown, and where second marriages are encouraged rather than abhorred. I sound as if I were preaching, and certainly if I had ever thought of lecturing, marriage a sacrament and love a sacramental would have been a favourite and constant theme of mine.

In the art or profession, in the married state and home life, in God's commandments and the Church's, may be found sufficient evidences of the Will of God with regard to our ordinary lives. And if we follow His Will we live in His Order. If I go against His Will, I fall out of this Order into an outside place of Confusion. My will and His clash, and I go under. The whole of the great unthinking modern world is obviously a weltering confusion of human beings locked in a struggle for life outside God's Order. This confusion and struggle has grown greater and greater since the War, and naturally, seeing that the

whole of the monstrous War was absolutely opposed to God's Will and Ordinance. It seems a vain thing to appeal to the generality in the present welter to seek and find out the Will of God. But the Catholic man should more than ever wait on this high manifestation and seek it out. It can be done. And its blessedness far exceeds the world's happiness. I think the story of my life proves all this.

I was influenced, as I think I have told you, from my earliest years by the belief that the day's happenings, however trivial, were all part of *l'action de Dieu*, that in them I could find sufficient mortification, abounding sanctification, and a rule of conduct. And this came to me through Père Caussade from my incomparable mother. "Action de mon Dieu!" he cries, "vous êtes mon livre . . . ce n'est pas en consultant vos autres ouvrages que je deviendrai ce que vous voulez faire de moi; c'est en vous recevant en toutes choses par cette unique voie royale. . . . Ce que Dieu fait à chaque moment, c'est une pensée divine signifiée par une chose créée; ainsi toutes celles où il nous intime sa volonté, sont autant de noms et autant de paroles où il nous montre son désir. . . . Ah! vous cherchez l'idée de Dieu, et vous avez la substance; vous cherchez

la perfection, et elle est dans tout ce qui se présente à vous de soi-même. Vos souffrances, vos actions, vos attraits sont des espèces sous lesquelles Dieu se donne à vous par soi-même, pendant que vous tendez vainement à des idées sublimes, dont il ne veut point se revêtir chez vous. . . . Tout ce qui se fait dans nous, autour de nous, et par nous, renferme et couvre son action divine. Elle est là très réellement et très certainement présente, mais d'une présence invisible: ce qui fait que nous sommes toujours surpris, et que nous ne connaissons son opération que lorsqu'elle ne subsiste plus Si nous percions le voile, et si nous étions vigilants et attentifs, Dieu se révélerait sans cesse à nous, et nous jouirions de son action en tout ce qui nous arrive. A chaque chose nous dirions: DOMINUS EST: c'est le Seigneur! et nous trouverions dans toutes les circonstances que nous recevons un don de Dieu!" [4]

I had been taught by my mother as a child to say DOMINUS EST to everything that happened. She did me a beautiful large illuminated card of these words which hung over my bed in the nursery as a reminder, and has been about with me everywhere, ever since. For four years I turned its face to the wall, that I

[4] *Abandon,* pp. 42, 43, 110, 22.

might not be reminded. When all went well with me through the day I would forget the meaning of the words, characteristically enough, but when I was afflicted, or punished through creatures, I recognised Him at once and would cry DOMINUS EST! Oh, if on that tragic night when I learnt that Cressida had left me for ever, if holding fast to reason, good sense and faith, I could but have uttered, even in accents of despair, the dear, familiar cry of DOMINUS EST, He would assuredly have folded me in His arms until the hurricane had passed. There in the near neighbourhood of His heart, I should have heard Him rebuke the winds, and to the waves say: "Peace, be still," and there I should have learnt in the great calm which followed that He did but require me to wait, and watch, and work with Him for the deliverance of my bride. Through His human nature He has become so much our comrade that He will have us share with Him, as a knight his squire, in the work He does for our welfare. If one man do another a great wrong, it is in vain that he pray God to right it if he does not himself work with God to that end. Only when a man is broken in every limb and lies helpless, will He bear the whole burden and *carry*. He did but ask for four years of patience, faith, hope

and prayer, to make me a worthier bridegroom when my bride should have been delivered from the city of Confusion.

Another lesson I believe I have learnt in life, and that is how to take it. I can be no less alive than other ordinary mortals to the *difficulties* of belief, to the darkness and confusion of the world, to the question why man and the universe were made, why evil exists and so forth. Although I am without letters, I believe I could pile up arguments with the best of them, not certainly to build up a positive system, but at least to advocate a complete scepticism. Only then I am confronted by myself. And I am confronted by virtue and vice, and the effects of both upon me. I cannot get away from virtue and vice, so I must have a system if I am to choose between them. What if the system be blind, naked faith, I find that it alone, speaking in the name of an ever-living Judge, approves the one and condemns the other, as I understand them. This blind faith is offered me by a Church, and the existence of virtue and vice compels me with gratitude to accept her gift. The existence of evil does not throw me off the track, for I see that the wrong which He permits never harms the man who does the right which He ordains. The

reason why the Catholic man pursues the even tenor of his busy way, unaffected in his fundamental beliefs by the arguments and discoveries of the eager world, is simply due to the fact that he has solved what seems to him the mightiest problem of them all: he has elected virtue and reprobated vice. With the magic talisman of this standard, there is revealed to him the whole scheme of faith and God's most blessed Order. I never in my life did anything wrong, but what it was wholly and entirely my own fault, *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* That applies to every living soul; it is all man needs to know, and when he acknowledges this as a fact, unfathomable mysteries will sit lightly upon him. God's ways with the individual soul are no abyss:[5] it is only in their general working that they are past finding out. Everywhere in the general scheme of the universe there is handwriting, only it is in a cypher of which we do not possess the decypher. Small matter to the individual, for within his heart the handwriting of God is in capital letters which every child who runs may read. But he often prefers to waste time over the problems of a cypher which can never be decyphered, and so the imperious call within to a changed course of

[5] Psalm xxv, *Judicia Dei abyssus multa.*

life becomes void and of no effect. Man, at his best, cries aloud and hungers for a positive system such as the Catholic Christian holds, but he is not straight in his dealings with God; he chaffers and will not pay the price, which is the practice of the whole range of the Christian virtues. Give me virtue, he cries admiringly with the young Augustine, *sed noli modo*, but not yet: the price is too heavy; I cannot pay till I am older.[6] And so he loses his chance. It is a question of conduct alone, not of argument or evidence, which keeps men from the positive system of the Church. Only the desire of Christian virtue can light up the torch of faith, only its practice screen the flame from extinction by every wind of passion. Let mortification wait on fervent prayer, and the virtue of holy discretion on both, and the torch of Faith will instantly take fire. I never yet knew the man who *thought* himself into the Church: there is no other way but to *work* himself in by the best deeds he knows. And so I never yet knew the man who thought himself *out* of the Church: he goes out into the outer confusion only by capitulation to some of the opposites of Christian virtue. The Catholic Christian hears without perturbation of the

[6] Confessions, viii. 7.

uncomprehended mysteries that go along with Faith, so long as he do but have and hold a comprehended vision of the sanctity which the Church sets before him. He acknowledges with Père Caussade, that the letter of God's Book of the Universe kills, and so he looks instead to its spirit which giveth life. Before you can turn him from the Faith, you must first lower his standard of virtue. Virtue is Faith's great appeal, and vice her unanswerable argument. . . . Well, I must say you've stood my preaching uncommonly well, but here endeth this sermon,—at all events for to-day.

* * * * *

And now, dear Mauldsley, I think my story has been sufficiently told to satisfy the exigencies of Fra Antonio. Thanks, a thousand thanks, for your patience and goodwill. When you write, be brief; I have been carried away to dwell too much on family history,—please don't bore people with my ancestors. I don't want my portrait painted: a rapid outline sketch will more than suffice. If you think good can come to a single soul from knowledge of a life I would rather have hidden in my grave, then publish when the right time comes. Do you and Casauban decide.

I cannot be long for this world. It is strange, late in life, to make a friend, but in you I feel that I have acquired a true friend on the brink of the grave. Will you, then, do me one great service, and also be the executor of my few last wishes? The service I ask you needs a little explanation. Adrian, the 17th Lord Cleresby, died in 1913. His two brothers are both since dead: Colonel Peregrine Mavourez was in the English army, the first to serve in the regular army since the abdication of James II. He was killed at Ypres. The other brother, Richard, died young as a Lazarist missionary in North Borneo. Adrian had two sons, Simon, 18th Lord, and Carlos, who was a sub-deacon when the War broke out. Simon enlisted as a private in August 1914; Carlos' ordination was hurried on, and he came out to the front as an assistant chaplain. Simon was killed at the battle of the Marne, and Carlos, Lord Cleresby, succumbed to trench fever in June 1916. I succeeded, though no man knew it. I was actually the last Lord Cleresby during the final six months of my life as a super. Leave was given to presume my death, and Cleresby Castle and Mavourez-Melcombe passed to the heiress, Mary Cecilia, sister of Adrian, 17th Lord, who is married to Mr.

Brian O'Neill of Castle Kilgorran, County Tipperary. Now what I want you to do for me when I am dead, is to send proof of my death and identity to my cousin Cecilia, so that she and her successors may enjoy their inheritance on grounds of certainty and no longer of presumption. Since our name and estates had to pass to the foreigner, I am glad that he is of the Irish race. Its men are brave and chivalrous, and round its women plays the lambent flame of purity which graced the brides of Cleresby. In the past, too, the Mavourez have fought for the kings of Ireland, and notably at the Boyne Water, where Ensign Lorenzo Mavourez was killed and two of his brothers wounded.

* * * * *

As to my last few wishes, if you will be so generous as to carry them out for me, they are these: Let me be buried at the foot of the sward before dear Casauban's cottage. I don't mind a slab of stone or marble over me: a visible memorial will remind the Solitaries on their walks to and fro to pray for me who so much need prayers. But let the one word CHRISTOPHER alone be cut in the stone: no date, please: no hint as to who I was. I have

saved enough out of the small salary I accepted here, to pay all my expenses. The little picture done by my mother of the Child I saw in the skies high over the Rhine is for Cressida So is the large illuminated card with the words DOMINUS EST. Ask that it be hung in the room where my mother was born in the Villa Cavalca, now called by the happier name of Villa Bona. Of my six copies of the *Imitation* I would like the Latin one to go to Fra Antonio, the Fench to Casauban, the Italian to Giovanni: he is no more a reader than I am, but, poor chap, he will like to have a memento. We have been very happy in our work together. Then I love and revere where he adores: that is another bond of union. The Flemish copy is for you; the English for Father Phil Jones. Send the German copy, please, to Cressida: like me, she ever loved that moving and most lyrical language. Let her, too, have the copy of Père Caussade with my mother's name written in it: Bona Cavalca. My copy of *St. Gideon Mavourez: Crusader and Anchorite* is for the Sambuca Library. My old *Garden of the Soul*, with all the *santini* in it, have buried with me, please: veterans both of us, perhaps we are a little out-of-date. My clothes, such as they are, are for friends in our little village. For

them, too, please, any few soldi that may be over. Do you distribute as you think best: Giovanni will advise. With this, I think I have exhausted my largesse. Surely never was Peer of the Realm at his last end so closely attended by my Lady Poverty.

* * * * *

Dear Mauldsley, I am well declined into the vale of years: sixty-four the other day. The evening of life must surely be drawing to a close. I have felt more at ease since you came out, for you will take my place and relieve our dear friend of the practical side of this wonderful place. Yes, wonderful it is, even to me, and its deep peace to-day seems to speak of the everlasting rest. As the narrow way approaches to its end, it widens a little; the going gets a bit easier; until at last it becomes a spacious, restful piazza before the golden gates of the New Jerusalem. On either side of it run green pastures; in the middle of it plays the fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. The glory of Lebanon is there; the beauty of Carmel and Sharon; the dew of Mount Hermon. All around, each in his place in the Sun of Righteousness, resting awhile after long toil, sit God's pensioners, awaiting

the day when the golden gates shall open to them and disclose the Everlasting Light. *Exultant in Domino*: I can hear the hymn of the octogenarian priest, *Jésus, il est temps de nous voir.*[7] I can hear the *Quousque Domine*, the psalm of the Solitary, already conjoined to his Lord in intimate fruition. Here, too, have I crawled; here sat me down, and He has not said me nay. And here I will continue to sit until my noble and most bountiful Master shall take me by the hand and, after I know not what purgation, lead me into the new, and active, and blessed life, where I shall dwell for ever in the Presence of Him Who liveth and reigneth, One God, world without end. "If it be now 'tis not to come; if it be not to come it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all."

[7] Mgr. Baunard's *Vieux Prêtre.*

CHAPTER IX

REQUIEM ÆTERNAM

He died without illness or suffering of any sort, being found in his bed like one most peacefully asleep. It was his habit to rise at six, and attend the seven o'clock Mass. Giovanni missed him there, and went at once in search of him.

Poor Casauban was deeply moved. "'There cracks a noble heart,'" he said. Christopher had taken off his beard soon after my arrival, and this helped to bring out the beauty and nobility of his face to the full. He looked as if in the act of death he might have caught some notes of the heavenly music that visited him in his prison cell so many years ago. "'Good-night, sweet friend,'" said Casauban, quoting that Hamlet which was so often on Christopher's lips, "'good-night, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.' But we must act without loss of time," he went on. "I have exchanged rare letters with Miss Vaughan. Through me, she knows him to be here, at

peace and content in his life and work. She lives almost exclusively at the Villa Bona now, and is certain to be there this glorious month of May. To think of it: it must be nearly forty-six years since they met, an ardent boy and radiant girl, in that old city schoolroom. Both have bravely borne tragic sorrow: both have nobly endured a heavy expiation. The Verruca cannot be much more than a hundred kilometers from here. I will write her a note and send Giovanni himself over for her in the motor. I am sure she would wish to be here. There will be plenty of time for her to get back here by this evening. We will bury him to-morrow morning, there where he asked, on the edge of the sward in front of my cottage. I will have the big statue of St. Augustine, his patron, which is on the other side of the wood, moved over and placed at the head of his grave. Dr. Castelfranchi will be here at nine o'clock: he will certify to the death. The body must be dressed, as custom requires, in a full suit of clothes: the *contadini* would not understand our simple winding-sheet. We will place the coffin open in the church, and to-morrow morning's Mass before the funeral shall be *coram cadavere*. Listen! Listen!" The church bell had begun to toll, and each Solitary, as if upon

a given signal, was tolling the bell outside his cottage. The echoing woods and valleys joined in the mourning for his *transitus*. "Let us go and do our part," said Casauban, "though joy-bells would be more in place for one whose presence is so desired by the heavenly Child!"

* * * * *

Cressida arrived at five o'clock in the afternoon. We had heard the motor signalling in the valley below, and Casauban and I were waiting outside the villa to receive her. Giovanni's wife had also been told to be in waiting. Cressida alighted quietly from the motor, and I was immediately introduced to her. "How good of you," she said to Casauban; "how thoughtful of you to send for me. May I see him?"

"Of course. Of course. But first go in and rest a little. This is Teresina, my *fattore's* wife. She will look after you and get you some tea."

It was wonderful to me to see Cressida, having so recently heard her story. I was at once struck by the absence of all signs of age, grief or weariness. The rich, red-gold hair was only sparsely strewn with silver threads; the face was without the wrinkles of age; her

step was light and quick; her figure slim and youthful. The clear, blue eyes were restful and at peace.

"What a lovely place!" she said as we went up the steps of the perron. "What a heavenly spot to die in. How easy the ascent to Heaven from here. I know this place from Mr. Mauldsley's book. Ever since I read it, I have wanted to do for women what Mr. Casauban has done for men. I have an idea—but all confused. You will let me consult you before I leave, will you not?"

In a quarter of an hour she rejoined us, and we walked towards the Inclosure. There was no monastic rule to prevent her entrance. We went into the church together. The coffin was lying open on its bier: three tall yellow tapers were burning on either side of it. Cressida placed a hand on each ridge of the coffin, and bent low over it. "Oh, what a beautiful face," she said quietly. "So good, so good. He was good through and through. His one thought was to be good. And he was so humble, too; so simple. Really and truly humble, in spite of his great strength and splendid intelligence. How young he looks, a boy. His spirit was always fresh and boyish, in sympathy with all living things. What a noble face! He looks

like the true descendant of that heroic family which gave so many knights and cavaliers to their country, so many saints and steadfast martyrs to the church. Their magnanimous souls were ever with causes of which the world was unworthy. Father Charles Bouverie of the Oratory, who was a clerk with him in the early days at the bank, told me that he owed his conversion and vocation entirely to Chris, and would have lost his way in life but for Chris's example. And all this although religion was never so much as mentioned between them. It was simply that he was so obviously good, and so happy with it, that other people must have wanted to be like him."

"I can say the same for myself," replied Casauban. "But I was on the verge of foundering, when he came to my aid and drew me ashore. To me he did talk, because I first talked to him. But it was simply his life and himself so eloquent of virtue, order and good sense, that opened my eyes to the fact that I was living in confusion and peril. Who knows how many others his straight life and example may not have influenced. Yet he always thought that he had never converted or influenced a soul. As Miss Vaughan has said, how truly humble he was!"

"It can never be known," said Cressida, "how deeply he influenced me. I, too, owe my salvation to him. On our last meeting, he showed me, what I ought to have known, that no partial sacrifice could satisfy us, that a complete holocaust was expected of us. And he who was so active, yet directed my thoughts to the contemplative life, in which, however imperfectly, I have found my vocation."

Cressida bent down and gazed again at the white face, sweet in its last quiet sleep. How I admired her composure and restfulness. It told how high her own soul had climbed. Her eyes were full, but not to overflowing. Teresina had prepared a large nosegay of violets for her room. She bore them with her now and laid them on his breast beside the battered old copy of the *Garden of the Soul*, just above the thin, white, tapering hands which held a crucifix and his old, well-worn Rosary. She moved away of her own accord, and we followed. I had dreaded her visit to Christopher's coffin, but she had been so still and brave, so admirable in her noble grace and quiet dignity.

At the head of the perron there were seats.

"May I talk to you here a little?" she asked. "Have you time? I have had an idea in the last few years that I would like to devote the

Villa Bona to a Retreat for women who have a call to the solitary life, but not to a Religious Order. Separate cottages, such as you have here, would be quite unsuited to women. The wise Carthusians never allowed their women more than the ordinary monastic cell. Each of my guests should have her two rooms. The big rooms of the villa would have to be cut up and adapted accordingly. The garden is perhaps not large enough, but I could greatly increase the Inclosure by throwing into it an adjoining *bosco* which belongs to me. I should, of course, continue to live there, and be responsible for the material side of the life. A difficulty will be to find the right spiritual guide, but if God approve the idea he will appear. A still greater difficulty might be to obtain the consent of the Ordinary. But I know him, and believe he will approve. The future certainly perplexes. How is ownership of the property to be carried on when I am gone? It is here, perhaps, where I need your good counsel most of all. But I will not trouble you to-night. You will think over all this, and let me talk again before I leave to-morrow."

At eight o'clock next morning the funeral Mass took place, the body being present in the open coffin. I obtained the privilege of acting

as server. As I have explained in *The Solitaries of the Sambuca*,[1] the church (SS. Paul and Anthony) is of peculiar design. Each Solitary has his shut-in stall, but they are divided at such an angle that they can see the altar without being seen. Here, unseen by anyone, they also receive Holy Communion. At the bottom of the church is a space railed off for the public; there knelt Cressida, with Dr. Castelfranchi, Giovanni and Teresina, the servants from the villa, the workers from our little village, and many people from Vicolo, the big village in the plain below. When the time came for Holy Communion, I attended the priest, as is the custom in this country, with a lighted candle. I would rather not have referred to what followed, but it seems to me that I owe it to the memory of my dead friend. Be it imagination, be it overwrought nerves, as the Sacred Host was placed upon her lips, I saw very faintly and but as a flash, the glory of the diaphanous light and golden tongues of flame. But what I can avouch for with entire certainty is the ecstasy of prayer in which Cressida was rapt out of herself. She was oblivious to what passed around her, and could not control her sighs of deep, loving contentment. There was

[1] Page 189.

a light of bliss upon her face that all might see. Something stirred powerfully within her. And when I remembered that her heart and his had been as one all these long years in a constant communion,

> Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
> Distance, and no space was seen,

it seemed to me as if the Everlasting Arms had embraced them both in that day's Divine Communion.

> So they loved, as love in twain
> Had the essence but in one;
> Two distincts, division none:
> Number there in love was slain.

The priest made his thanksgiving in front of the altar. Then, after vesting in a black cope, he gave the absolution, and the lid of the coffin was screwed on. Giovanni had been active in organising an imposing funeral. The procession was headed by the village band of Vicolo, of which Christopher had been president. The parish Confraternity of San Mommé, Vicolo, in their beautifully crimped white cappas and red capes followed next, and then the sixteen Solitaries in their tunics, bareheaded. The coffin was borne by six of our own contadini, dressed in white cappas with masks, and beside them, six on each side, walked twelve

Salesian sisters from the Institute at Vicolo, carrying candles. Immediately behind the coffin, dressed in a simple black cashmere gown, her head covered by a black lace mantilla, walked Cressida, holding a large yellow taper. The crowd of villagers who followed had fallen back respectfully some twenty paces, and she stood out alone in space as if she had been a Queen. The procession did not proceed immediately to the grave, but went winding through the woods along yellow paths and across grassy swards, up hill and down dell, past the trim cottages of the Solitaries and the big white statues of Saints and Anchorites. At the sound of the sweet piercing wail of the funeral march, crowds of birds rose into the air and flew backwards and forwards overhead, calling loudly, more in delight than affright, so it seemed.

This is the opening of the funeral march that the band played for Christopher Mavourez through the whole of the half-hour's reverent procession through the woods, except when the music ceased to rest, and then the drums, in solemn rhythmic roll, took up their tale. There is none of the oppressive gloom of a Dead-March-in-Saul in popular Italian funeral music: it is hopeful, even cheerful; there is sor-

row for the absence of a friend who has become invisible, joy that he lives for ever.

I had been made master of the ceremonies, and so had to pass continually up and down the procession, directing. Never have I seen sight so impressive and beautiful. There was real pomp here, however simple, high honour, hom-

age, paid as if to a dead king and hero; comfort, consolation, respect, admiration, offered to the queen and saint who survived him. There was loud lamentation, too, which must have severely tried the brave woman who followed alone with such wonderful self-control. "Sor Cristoforo" had been much beloved. He had early been voted "senza superbia," the greatest compliment that the simple Italian can pay to a "gran signore." His loss was therefore deeply felt.

At length the procession came to the grave-side on the sward before Casauban's cottage. The music ceased; the lamentations became more pronounced. Poor Giovanni gave way badly. It was terrible to hear the stifled sobs of this strong, matter-of-fact, quiet, practical man of affairs, and to see him so shaken by feeling. More than ever did I admire the brave heroine who, deathly pale, leant on Dr. Castelfranchi's arm for support, crying gently and quietly. But I was shocked to notice the change that had come over her in the night. After a brief impassioned panegyric by Fra Antonio, the body was lowered to its last resting-place and the deeply moving ceremony was at an end.

For the rest of the morning Cressida sat out in front of the villa, writing. Teresina discovered her there in a dead faint, and ran for Dr. Castelfranchi, who had not yet left for his home in the village hospital below. Casauban and I were summoned. Castelfranchi had gone to our little pharmacy in the basement of the villa to mix a cordial. Meantime Cressida revived. "Mr. Casauban," she said apologetically, "I fear I am not able to travel this afternoon. I am sorry to be so troublesome. May I stay a day or two till my strength comes back?"

"Why a day or two only," replied Casauban. "Do please stay as long as you like. The air here is bracing and will do you good. Teresina is entirely at your service."

"How kind you are. I have been writing out a codicil to my will this morning. I ought to have asked your leave first to two of its provisions. I am leaving the Cavalca Villa and grounds to you and Mr. Mauldsley jointly, so that if I die soon, you may appoint somebody to carry out the scheme of which I spoke last night. If the experiment fails, if the Ordinary disapproves,—I have no heirs, please sell all and devote the property to any charitable pur-

poses you may think fit. It could not be in better hands for distribution. I have long since sold Llanymdovery, and I will see that, besides the villa itself, ample means are left to carry out the project. Mr. Casauban, I have to thank you from the bottom of my heart for a lesson you have taught me. Ever since I read the *Solitaries of the Sambuca*, I have forbidden my lawyers to invest savings, and have given them away as you do. As you say, giving is child's play to him that hath.

"My second request is that, seeing that you have no monastic inclosure, you would allow me to be buried here. Not in the same grave, but next to him, close by him. He wished his name CHRISTOPHER alone to be written where he lies. Please, I would like nothing else but CRESSIDA to be written over me. Let the two slabs that cover us be placed side by side, and be joined by the insertion of a small slab for an inscription. On this will you, dear Mr. Casauban, write a few words saying that here in the soil of this holy Solitude we found in the end union on earth, and that here, too, we entered into eternal rest. And, oh please may what you write be in Latin? I know he loved that everything connected with the Church and her

ceremonies should be in Latin. Even his Rosary, I now hear, he always said in Latin."

"All your wishes shall be scrupulously obeyed, if so be that it falls to us to carry them out," replied Casauban. "But I hope you will come over here for an annual visit for many years to come. Let it become your custom to stay here every month of May. Consider the visit as your annual Retreat. Please Heaven, the peace of nature and the peace of God will never be wanting in these lovely woods."

Dr. Castelfranchi came up at that moment. He felt her pulse again. "I am not well enough to travel to-day, doctor," she said. "My kind friends will let me stay a few days longer. Do not condemn me to bed, dear doctor. I am not ill. All I want is rest. *Requiem æternam.* Let me always sit out here in the sun. I will obey you in every other way."

We moved away and left her to her writing. "She will hardly live a week," said Castelfranchi, "and she knows it. It is a case beyond medical science. The spirit has already poised for departure. After that act, involuntary and unconscious as it may be, no man may hope to recall it to earth."

Castelfranchi was right. Within a week her rare and beautiful spirit had fled. Who could wish it otherwise? Every day she had walked, with Teresina's help, as far as Casauban's cottage. Under the little porch a chaise-longue had been placed for her, and there she lay some hours every day in great tranquility. There each day I went to greet her. And there where I had first seen Paul, there where I had first seen Christopher, there I found her, lying hushed in death, still and beautiful as the figure of Monna Ilaria on her marble bier in the Cathedral at Lucca. In her hand she held a copy of the *Imitation* open towards the end of Chapter V of the Third Book, and I like to believe that she died in the actual reading of that paragraph which speaks so melodiously of her love for God:

5. Amor vigilat, et dormiens non dormitat. Fatigatus non lassatur, arctatus non coarctatur, territus non conturbatur: sed sicut vivax flamma et ardens facula, sursum erumpit, secureque pertransit. Si quis amat, novit quid haec vox clamet. Magnus clamor in auribus

Love watches, and sleeping slumbers not; toil-worn is not weary; affrighted, is not dismayed; in bondage, is no prisoner; but like a living flame and torch a-fire, it leaps upward and passes onward untroubled. He who loves, well knows the accents of this voice. A loud

Dei est ipse ardens affectus animæ quæ dicit: Deus meus, amor meus: tu totus meus, et ego totus tuus.

cry in God's ears is that which the soul proffers in her glowing ardour: My God, my Love: Thou art all mine, and I am all Thine.

The signs of age and weariness which had begun to appear since the day of the funeral had all been smoothed away now, and I thought of her rather as the sweet young girl of fifteen with the lambent flame of virginal purity playing round the golden crown of her head, whom Christopher had met in a city schoolroom in that far distant month of May, than of the saintly woman before me, mature in good works, chastened by sacrifice, and sanctified by those high states of supernatural prayer which rise there where there is unity without multiplicity, there where the soul is simple, essential and one in itself, that is to say, in its very ground and basis, in which a man may apprehend the *arcana* of his spiritual hymen, though it be in no wise given him to utter the unspeakable words which he has heard in the consecration service of those mystic nuptials.

* * * * *

We buried Cressida side by side with Christopher, on the edge of the peaceful woods.

Her soul ascended, encircled as by an aureole with the sacred fires which arose from the hidden recesses of the Solitaries in the Church of St. Paul and St. Anthony. A great block of white Carrara marble covers their peaceful resting-place. It is now inclosed in a low wrought-iron railing. A marble statue of St. Austin in the act of blessing rises majestic at the head of the grave, and on either side of him we have planted a young cypress. Their names, CHRISTOPHER, CRESSIDA, nothing more, have been engraved at the head of the tomb. UNA PRECE is written at the foot of it. And in the centre figures the legend which Casauban wrote, telling of their last union on earth in the grave, and of their blessed union for ever in the world beyond:

SACRIS SUB UMBRACULIS HUJUS SOLITUDINIS
UNIONEM INVENERUNT SUPREMAM PACEMQUE
CONSECUTI SUNT ÆTERNAM.

Here the anthem doth commence:
Love and constancy is dead;
Phœnix and the turtle fled
In a mutual flame from hence.

Threnos.

Beauty, truth and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,
Here enclos'd in cinders lie.

REQUIEM ÆTERNAM

Death is now the Phœnix nest;
And the turtle's loyal breast
To eternity doth rest.

Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and beauty buried be.

To this urn let those repair
That are either true or fair;
For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

From *The Phœnix and the Turtle.*

WEE JESU AND ST. JOHNNIKIN

WEE JESU AND ST. JOHNNIKIN

The following is a translation of Christopher Mavourez's favourite Netherlandish ballad which he learnt from the old Flemish maid when a child at Bruges. It is redolent of the ages of faith, and of the blithe spirit which is born of faith. Against the academic properties I have kept, where I could, the Netherlandish diminutives, if only as an object lesson of the loss our melodious language sustains in not having vindicated to itself the free use of this infinitely tender and delightful means of depicting the familiar graces and intimate affections of the human heart. The beauty of the original as language I can in nowise convey, but in the face of such honied speech and flowing measures I, for one, shall cease to mock at Goropius Becanus, the ponderous old Flemish philologist, who, in the sixteenth century, demonstrated in the most approved fashion, that Low Dutch was the language spoken in Eden in the happy days before man's first disobedience.

This translation originally appeared in the *Caldey Pax* of May, 1920.

CHRISTOPHER AND CRESSIDA

Give ear, and hear, and I will tell,
What on a summer's day befell
  Wee Jesu and St. Johnnikin,
  A-sporting with a lambikin,
In the fresh green springing clover-land,
Each with a crusekin in his hand.

Their plump white footikins were all bare;
Their lippikins red as coral rare,
  The chubby little prattlers,
  They sat by the running waters,
The sun it stood up in Heaven so high,
Each drank the other's milk-cup dry.

One stroked the lambikin's noddlekin sweet,
The other tickled it under its feet;
  The lambikin went a-springing,
  And Johnnikin followed singing;
And skipping and tripping over the lea,
These two krollebollekens danced for glee.

But as from the dance they panting stood,
The lambikin baa'd aloud for food;
  Wee Jesu gave it crumbs of bread,
  And Johnnikin gave it hay instead;
In the whole wide world no pair so gay,
As these two cousinkins were that day.

Then Johnnikin when it was eventide,
Set cousinkin on the lamb astride:
  "My pretty man, go ride apace,
  'Tis time that we did homeward race;
For Motherkin will be all a-fret,
That we are not back in the homekin yet."

They rode and ran all hand in hand,
And rolled and tumbled in the sand,
  These tiny weeny chitkins,
  They gave such mighty skipkins,
That all the children stopped their play,
To see the toddlekins pass that way.

At home dear Motherkin had this hour,
Kneaded a cake of sugar and flour;
  Down sat the babes so debonair
  To eat their dainty simple fare;
They were so gleeful and so glad,
No King's feast ever such merriment had.

And after eating down they sank,
On their kneekins our dear God to thank;
  Mary gave each tiny mite
  A sweetmeat, and kissed them both good-night,
And sang them to sleep with a lullaby,
While the lamb went to bed in the stall close by.

M.C.

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